

S E R M O N S

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF

R E L I G I O N, &c.

4454.95

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S E R M O N S

**ON THE
PRESENT STATE**

**OF
R E L I G I O N**

**IN
THIS COUNTRY,**

**AND
ON OTHER SUBJECTS.**

By the Rev. SEPTIMUS HODSON, M.B.

Late of Caius College, Cambridge

**RECTOR OF THRAPSTON; CHAPLAIN OF THE ASYLUM; AND
CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE OF WALES.**

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

M.DCC.XCII.

S. M. Q. N. S.

PRESENT STATE

R. H. F. G. I. O. N.

THIS COUNTRY



ON SUBJECTS

By the Rev. SEPTIMUS HOBSON, M.A.

late of Christ Church, Oxford.

RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION, AND

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCE OF WALES.

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TO THE QUEEN.

MADAM,

I BEG leave to offer my acknowledgments for the permission you have given me to shelter this small volume under your Majesty's name. But I make the less apology for obtruding myself on your notice, convinced, as I am, that the humblest attempt to recall mankind to a sense of religious and moral duty, will be favourably received by a Personage, who, though seated on that eminence which commands observation, has been on all hands confessedly exemplary in the various virtues of her high station.

Long may the peace and prosperity of your Majesty's throne remain undisturbed. And many, many years may you continue to live, as you do at present, in the hearts of your affectionate people!

Thus prays your Majesty's most dutiful subject and servant,

SEPTIMUS HODSON.

ASYLUM,
14, 1792.

TO THE CLERK

MADEIRA

I have to offer my sincere thanks for the
kindness with which you have received this letter
and for the interest you have taken in it. I have
been very much gratified by the reply you have
sent me, and I am sure that the same will be
sent to all the other correspondents. I am
very much obliged to you for the trouble you
have taken in writing to me, and I am sure
that you will be very much gratified by the
reply I have sent you.

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reply I have sent you.

STEPHEN HUTTON.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE plan of the Five Sermons preached during Lent, is taken from a late excellent tract, entitled, "An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World." The vices, the follies, and the negligences of that part of the community, which is particularly addressed in the Work alluded to, prevail, with a little modification, at this time, through all the classes of society in this country. From the first moment when I read that useful little book, I determined to make its topics the subject of pulpit animadversion, and to lay them plainly and honestly before my hearers. It will be highly gratifying to me, therefore, if the Author approves of my plan, in extending the design to the remaining ranks of society.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Sermons, which are now offered to the Public, were not originally intended for publication; but as they appeared to me, in the delivery, to interest the attention of my congregation, I conceived a hope, that the first transient effect which is produced by a public address, might be fixed upon the heart, by a careful and serious perusal in private. And when once I conceived it possible to render the effect permanent upon some who heard these discourses, I naturally indulged myself in another delightful hope, that I might extend that effect to a few who were not present at the delivery. The Reader will observe, that I have merely taken the topics of the Author alluded to, and that I have not been guilty of any farther piracy, except in a very few instances, into which I have been unavoidably led by a similitude of opinion, and the Author's very happy mode of treating the subject.

ADVERTISEMENT.

ject. However defective I may have been in the execution of my plan (and very far am I from being sanguine in the appreciation of my talents), I trust the Public will receive with candour and charity, the humblest attempt to spread the invaluable blessings of religion and virtue, and moral order.

ADVERTISING

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been

admitted to the membership of the Association since the last

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S E R M O N I.

ON THE DECREASE OF RELIGION.

St. JOHN, chap. xx. part of ver. 13.

*They have taken away my Lord; and I know
not where they have laid him.*

WE have now commenced that solemn season, which the church hath in its wisdom set apart for a more especial enquiry into the state of our spiritual concerns, and which it hath accompanied with suitable holy exercises and ordinances. This, with every other mark of church discipline and Christian profession, is now reduced to a mere empty name. It is a change, however, in the history of re-

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ligion,

Preached
at the
Asylum,
February
26, 1792.

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I.

ligion, which every good man must very deeply deplore. Externals are not only evidences of the existence of internals, but, in our present gross and imperfect state, they are also necessary aids and assistances to their preservation. The decay of rites and ceremonies is not merely the forerunner of the decay of religion in the heart, of which they are the vehicles; but it is a sign that the inward devotion is already extinct.

An outward profession of Christianity, and a compliance with the institutions of our church, are not only very generally laid aside, but, by a great many, are most prophanely ridiculed. It is impossible that the warmest advocates of the new philosophy should contend, that the times are bettered by this dereliction of the appearances and decorums of religion. Whoever looks into the world, with a thinking mind,

On the Decrease of Religion.

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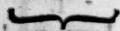
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I.

mind, must see that the most sacred obligations of christianity, and the pure and sublime morality of the gospel, are frittered away with the outward demonstration of faith in its doctrines, and the observance of its ordinances. It becomes, therefore, the indispensable duty of the ministers of God, who are appointed to uphold his religion in the world, to point out to mankind the error of their ways, and to endeavour to lead them back into the paths of Christian truth.

In compliance with this dictate of my conscience, in obedience to this commission from our Lord Jesus Christ, whose servant I am, I shall employ your attention, during the few Sundays of this holy season, on the real state of religion amongst us. In doing this, I shall pursue the method of a late Author, to whom the Christian world is highly indebted, and

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whose



whose modesty has concealed his name, while his benevolence has made a valuable attempt to open the eyes of his deluded fellow-creatures.

The words, which I have selected for my text, are the lamentation of Mary Magdalene over the empty sepulchre of her crucified Master. On the present occasion, I apply them metaphorically to the present aspect of his religion. Were an Apostle to descend from Heaven, from the participation of his Master's beatification, an Apostle who had caught the divine truths, the holy precepts from that Master's lips, who had, under the guidance of his inspiration, penned those sacred pages which form the only rule of belief and practice; were he to see how this religion, this holy word of truth, has been garbled by mankind for their own purposes, I say, he would not know the Gospel; he would think

think himself amongst the disciples of some new dispensation, and would say, SERMON
I.
“ They have taken away my Lord ;” they have taken away that religion which he came down from Heaven to declare, which he promulgated as the only means by which souls might be saved, “ and I know not where they have laid him ;” I know not where they have concealed this sacred and invaluable truth, I see no traces to lead me to it.

The decrease of religion appears to me to be so undeniably notorious, that I might assume it as a point granted ; but as, through carelessness and inattention, this decrease is not sufficiently observed, I shall endeavour, by illustrating the fact, to mark it so strongly that some of us, at least, may be awakened to a sense of our desperate state, and thereby induced to a reformation of our own conduct.

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I.

The decrease of religion itself, is FIRST apparent from the neglect of outward profession, and outward observances. Read the sermons of our eminent Divines; examine the history of the English church, not farther back than the beginning of the present century, and you will find men of the highest rank, the most acknowledged abilities, and the most accomplished manners, paying attention to the institutions and the seasons of religion, which people in a certain situation of life hardly ever think of at this day. Read the biography of times not very remote from our own, and how many illustrious statesmen, warriors, and senators are to be found, who have been most exemplary in their piety and devotion! how many great and noble names do we meet with,—their country's hope and glory,—who have thought it not unworthy of them to employ their talents

in

in the cause of their inextinguishable religion!

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But, why should I go back to the necessity of written testimony, when I speak in the presence of many, who have witnessed an alteration, which amounts almost to a revolution, in religious decorum in their own times? It would be unbecoming to instance particulars very minutely; but they who are at all advanced in years, and now hear me, will recollect that the very face of religion is altered since their younger days—They could tell you how much more numerously places of worship were attended, and how much more decent was the deportment of the hearers—They could tell you, how different a face religion wore in private families; how differently times and seasons were observed, the present season more especially, when all men testified the seriousness of their minds, by a peculiar gravity of dress—They could

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I.

tell you, that even amongst the most relaxed the Sabbath was comparatively kept holy—They could tell you, that amongst the higher classes, amongst the most abandoned individuals, no one dared to insult public decency, with that blazing profanation of the Sabbath, which it is now antiquated and unfashionable not to give into, and which is the very canker of public morality.

It was then a rare thing to hear the modesty of common conversation affronted by jests against religion, by undisguised and blasphemous avowal of infidelity, and by scurrilous reflections upon the established professors of it. Such conduct would then have been resented by the company who had been insulted with it, and would have stigmatized the parties who had been guilty of it. Far different features mark the social intercourses of the present day.

To

On the Decrease of Religion.

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To be decent, is to be morose; and to be disgusted at the scoff against religion, is to be fanatical. Men are emulous in their ridicule and their invectives against what is sacred, as if there were no other means of shewing the depravity of their hearts, and the emptiness of their understandings.

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A SECOND evidence of the decrease of religion amongst us, is to be found in the fashionable mode of resolving Christianity into a mere system of morality. I shall have occasion hereafter, to shew, that the gospel contains something more than morality. At present, I shall content myself with the fact, that the New Testament is put upon the same footing with the discourses of the sages of heathen antiquity. We know scarcely any thing of the Christian religion as it is taught in the New Testament. Even they who are not professed unbelievers, who do not wholly neglect public worship,

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I.

worship, treat all the peculiarities of the gospel with a great deal of indifference; as in no degree essential to a good life here, or to our eternal salvation hereafter. We hear nothing of the doctrines of faith, of the incarnation, of the atonement, of the power and efficacy of the Holy Spirit; those corner-stones of our religion; those doctrines by which alone a Christian can have any possible hope. A modern Christian seems to know but little of a Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: he talks of justice and mercy, but he forgets that there is no genuine Christian morality but what is the fruit of faith; and no works acceptable to God, but what are offered through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ. Were the Apostle St. Paul to come among us, and find Christianity changed into a system of justification by works, he would join in the lamentation of Mary Magdalene:

On the Decrease of Religion.

II

Magdalene: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."

SERMON

I.

But this is not all, we find a THIRD evidence of the decrease of religion in this, that after having resolved the whole of the gospel into morality, we proceed to resolve the whole of morality into a few virtues. I must again make use of an expressive word, we have garbled the morality of the gospel to our own immediate purpose; we have not made our practice subservient to Christian virtue, but Christian virtue subservient to our practice. Thus charity and beneficence are the virtues most accordant with what is called a liberal spirit, and best fall in with the gaiety and levity of the age; and, therefore, charity and beneficence are supposed to constitute an amiable character, and a good Christian. These virtues, or rather a counterfeit species of them,
may

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I.

may be exercised while we neglect the weighty calls of justice, soberness, temperance, and chastity. But, my brethren, let us not deceive ourselves ; if we are captivated with the beauty of one description of virtues, and yet disregard another of equal authority, such a partial obedience only increases our condemnation, because it shews that we have a capacity for all virtue, which we wilfully neglect : or, if we select for our practice one set of virtues, merely because they are accordant with our own dispositions ; a virtue practised on such selfish principles, that moment loses its whole value in the eye of God ; and if it is of use to our fellow creatures, it is nevertheless very little more than good arising out of evil. When our lives are in general relaxed, it certainly impeaches the veracity of the few virtues we possess : in a more particular manner, it attaches the

the virtues of charity and beneficence of which we so exultingly boast; for there can be no true charity which grows not out of Christian faith and Christian hope. That heart, which is warmed with the flame of genuine charity and beneficence, has caught a spark from the Divinity; it is in blessed union with its God, and must glow with the fervours of piety and devotion.

These are all the evidences of the decrease of religion which I shall at present insist upon. And, unhappy is it for mankind, that such a diminution of *that*, which is their best security for comfort and happiness here, has taken place in the world. High as may be the value of morality, we find that, alone, it is very insufficient to secure the authority of principle. Mankind set loose from religious obligations we see, in numberless instances, forget the grand duties of justice in their dealings

SERMON

I.

SERMON
I.

dealings with each other, of justice to their families, and justice to themselves. We see them, by extravagance and dishonest conduct, running headlong to ruin: and then, having no fears of a judgment to come, having no restraints of Christianity to check them, when they are no longer fit to live in this world, they plunge themselves by their own hand into that dark, unfathomable gulph of which they have no certain notions. This is one of the consequences of the decay of religion, which we see every day encreasing amongst us, to a most alarming degree.

To conclude: When Mary looked into the tomb, and saw not her Master there, she wept. Would to God that every man would look into his own heart, and if he find not his Saviour there, that he would weep over the deserted sepulchre! And may the goodness of God revive amongst us
the

On the Decrease of Religion.

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the almost expiring flame of religion! May the people of this land return unto him with contrite hearts, and then shall They be his people, and He will be their God! May we, after all our iniquities, and all our unworthiness, “ be saved amongst the remnant of the true Israelites; and be made one fold, under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end!”

On the Duty of Religion

the world expects him of religion! May
the people of this land return unto him
with contrite hearts, and then shall they
be his people, and he will be their God!
May we, after all our iniquities, and all
our unbelief, be saved amongst the
remnant of the true church; and be made
one flock, under one shepherd, Jesus Christ
our Lord; who lives and reigns with
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S E R M O N I I .

ENQUIRY INTO THE PRESENT STATE OF BENEVOLENCE.

1 Cor. chap. xiii. part of verse 3.

*Though I bestow all my Goods to feed the
Poor, and have not Charity, it profiteth
me nothing.*

IN my last Sunday's discourse I asserted the great decrease of religion amongst us. I illustrated this in three instances;—In the neglect of outward profession and outward observances;—In the fashionable mode of resolving Christianity into a mere system of morality;—and, afterwards, In resolving the whole of morality into a few virtues, viz. Charity and Beneficence. In the

Preached
at the
Asylum,
March 4,
1792.
Morning.

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II.

prosecution of the plan I then proposed, it is necessary to take notice of, and to consider that argument in favour of the present age, which is every day exultingly produced against the charge of irreligion, that its benevolence is unparalleled in any æra of the world.

That Benevolence is a beautiful feature of the present times I am ready to allow. It is not necessary, nor ought it, to be concealed, that what the enlightened and Christian judgments of some have planned for the relief and happiness of their fellow-creatures, is amply supported by the alms of others. And, extensive as these plans are, would to God they were encreasing, in an hundred-fold proportion, as the wants, the distresses, and the sorrows of mankind encrease! But when I am inclined to value myself upon a virtue, it behoves me to ascertain its real worth, and

and to examine my real pretensions to it, with a very critical eye, before I offer it in justification or mitigation of other omissions or commissions, or venture to plead it as an atoning merit. For want of this investigation, I am much inclined to fear that a very important mistake has taken place on this head.

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It has been the custom to flatter mankind into benevolence, by a notion of its exclusive excellence, as it is to lull the pangs of a distempered body, by the administration of an opiate. But let Us, my brethren, be above the unworthy artifice; let us do good, because it is our duty —because it is a branch of Christian virtue —because it is a natural fruit of Christian faith; and not because we are taught that, by a casual alms, we are entitled to think more highly of ourselves, and may rest secure that we have thus purchased the

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II.

crown of glory. My text gives us an alarm, which should put us upon a very serious enquiry into the nature and value of our benevolence; "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing:" *i. e.* "If I have not a root and principle of love to God in my heart, that carrieth me out to these actions, they all will signify nothing to me as to my eternal salvation, and happiness. Faith and love must be the roots and principles of all those works which are truly good, and acceptable to God *." Let us then resolutely pull the scales from our eyes, and candidly and impartially look into the title, which the present age has to the amiable character which is given of it.

* Vid. Poole's Annot.

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In the FIRST place, we are to enquire into the motives of our Benevolence. I arraign no man's motives in the good which he is the minister of. The chapter, from whence I have taken my text, teaches me a charity which "believeth all things; hopeth all things:" but it is my duty to put every man into a way to arraign himself; and, by that enquiry, his benevolence must stand or fall to his God, and to his own heart. The enquiry he is to make is, whether the alms he gives are for the love of God, or to make a shew before men—whether it be from real pity and compassion, from genuine sympathy with the groans and distresses of his fellow-creatures; or because it is popular, and he would not be behindhand with his neighbours—whether it be from goodwill, or to get rid of importunity—whether he considers it only as a part of his

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Christian obedience; or whether he means to bribe the justice of God into ignorance or forgiveness of other vicious or wicked practices?

In the SECOND place, before we stamp Benevolence with that all-atoning excellence, which we are inclined to ascribe to it in the present age, we ought to enquire, Whether Benevolence is a compensation for the want of other virtues. I think it is impossible that any man can assert this to be the case, who has any notions of the nature and attributes of God, from whatever source he may derive those notions. No rational religion can assert the commutation of virtues: and the undoubted doctrine of the Christian religion is, that no virtue in our present state is perfect enough to have any atoning quality in it, but through the merits of Jesus Christ; and that his merits will avail us
only

only by obedience, not in one point, but in all. It is almost unnecessary to cite Scripture on this subject, because every man must know it; I refer you to a single declaration from our Lord's own mouth, while I might produce the whole of the New Testament in confirmation of the same thing. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin" (and almsgiving, without other Christian virtues, is only tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin); and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone *."

In the THIRD place, we ought to enquire, Whether the manifest neglect of the severer virtues of the Gospel does not pro-

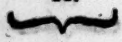
* Matthew xxiii. 23.

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II.

duce a more general injury, than our Benevolence diffuses general good. This is a case so much in point, that we ought not to be afraid of considering it closely. Luxury, dissipation, and extravagance, tend to create distress; they form a destructive vortex, which unavoidably absorbs not only the opulent, but those also whose circumstances admit not of excesses. Example produces imitation. No man has a right to say, Thus will I act, because I can afford it; and what have others to do with my conduct? Consider the classes of men as they really are—a combination of shades imperceptibly growing out of each other. The second shade cannot, in the nature of things, be totally distinct and separate from the first; nor the third from the second; and so you may pursue the observation, till you find that the whole gradation of shades is tinged throughout with the colour of the

the first. If then luxury, dissipation, and extravagance, are the prominent vices of the present times, I contend that these will create objects of Benevolence (and those the most pitiable and suffering objects); who, in an age of temperance, sobriety, and frugality, would never have been candidates for other men's bounty. In innumerable cases, where pecuniary circumstances are unequal, every other pretension is the same; and it would be a cynical, and not a Christian virtue, to leave a man unpitied and unrelieved in his ruin, who has been tempted to exceed his fortune by the luxury, the waste, and the insolence of another, whose unmerited superiority he could not brook. Of those countless objects, who call upon our benevolence with all the importunity of the most desperate distress the number is beyond all calculation, who have fallen from
better

SERMON
II.

 better days, or neglected happy opportunities, through that dissipation and extravagance which pervades all ranks of men; and which the most opulent have no right to indulge themselves in, when they consider that they are links of the same chain with others of more straitened circumstances. What Benevolence then is to wipe out the black malignant shade of so extended a criminality? What Benevolence is to apologize for that vice and disorder, which produce the evil of distress much faster than any alms-giving can relieve it?

In the FOURTH place, when we ascribe any particular excellence to our own times, we must do it upon comparison, or shall we do it rashly; we ought to take nothing for granted; but we should examine the question, Whether, in reality, the Benevolence of the present times is superior, in
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the wholesomeness of its effects, to the Benevolence of the times which are past.

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II.

There is much natural evil in the world, which no human prudence can prevent, and which, therefore, it is the indispensable duty of Charity to relieve. But I have said also, that folly and vice occasion and multiply distress: that Benevolence, therefore, will come nearest to the charity of the Gospel, which lessens vice. The good example of a superior, is practical Benevolence to an inferior. I shall put two cases, and the preference I shall leave to yourselves.

The Benevolent man, of former times, resides on his estate; the regularity of his family, and the authority of his presence, keep his neighbourhood moral and industrious; the diffusion of his income over the spot from whence he derives it creates, if not opulence, yet certainly a sufficiency,

which

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II.

which is far above want; and the very crumbs which fall from the rich man's table necessarily feed the indigent, without a single exertion of extraordinary bounty.

We will suppose the same man to be transplanted into the present age. Perhaps he leaves his estate entirely; he squeezes from it, with accurate nicety, even the very dregs of its produce. The people are left without a head to disorder, and to do what is right in their own eyes; without encouragement to labour, they of course fall into idleness; and with poverty pressing hard upon them, their whole lives are a scene of petty crimes, to keep off the cravings of want. Perhaps he sometimes visits them; and then, instead of correcting the abuses of his absence, the novelties and glare of modern dissipation destroy the little regularity and good order which remained.

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This is not an over-charged picture; you will observe it is general, and therefore admits of exceptions, which I hope are not unfrequent; and some I know are most amiable and illustrious. But to do justice to the latter character, I ought, to add, that there is a degree of good humour and liberality about him, which inclines him, at every tale of distress, to contribute readily his share towards its relief. And this is the ground of our present character for Benevolence.

Consider the comparative state of Benevolence in the middle classes of men, who are opulent, without enormous riches, and respectable, without elevation. Much, in small proportions, no doubt, is derived from them; but if the mite is more generally diffused, yet it must be confessed, that luxury has here also cut off the substantial bounties of individuals, which dignified

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II.

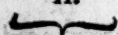
fied the annals of former times. Let me ask, what is the language that we every day hear? 'The articles of common life are
' so exorbitant, and people are required,
' if they mean to live at all in the world,
' to keep up such an expensive appearance,
' that they cannot afford to do those private acts of bounty which their inclinations would otherwise lead them to.' This is the language of the world; and its practice is ordered accordingly. How small a proportion does the alms-giving of too many of us bear to the expence of any one of our vices or our follies? Who now, as in times which are hardly out of the recollection of many of you, tythes his income to feed the poor, and to raise up the dejected? Who denies himself in any luxury or artificial craving? Who orders his affairs with frugality, that he may be able to wipe away—not a temporary

rary tear from a weeping eye—or to relieve that hunger which will rage again to-morrow; but to intercept the very sources of distress, and to heal up a heart deeply wounded and stricken? If some seed they scatter, whose harvest they might expect to reap in Heaven, how sadly do they adulterate it with a large portion of tares, which choak it up!

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Here I close my review of the subject: the conclusion I had rather trust to yourselves, than assist you in drawing it.

Some of you, doubtless, will be surprised that I should have made this review in a place which furnishes me with an argument against the obvious tendency of it. But I trust that no man, who hears me, does good upon so shallow a foundation, as to be afraid to trace the motive, or to examine into the nature of his bounty; nor would I, for a moment, suppose that
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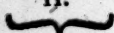
any man here could be shaken in his charity, because there is such a thing as spurious Benevolence in the world. Whoever knows the valuable effects of our institution; whoever considers the species of distress which it relieves; and whoever views the affecting objects which it protects, must confess, that the Benevolence which is here called forth, is one of the most lovely blossoms of our holy religion. Who then, that sees a wretched orphan received from the bed of an expiring parent into the arms of new fathers and new mothers; who sees an helpless and deserted female snatched from ruin, nurtured with instruction, and then presented to the world with the best guards of innocence; who is there that witnesses the diffusion of such precious seed, but must wish that it may grow up into a blessed harvest of eternal happiness to the benevolent

lent husbandman, and pour forth the fruits of everlasting joy an hundred fold into his own bosom? Impressed with this sentiment, I exhort every man to analyse his Benevolence, to put it upon its true motive, and its true grounds, to consider it as a part, and not as the whole of his duty; that so, after having been instrumental in saving others, he may himself not finally be cast away. My brethren, true Benevolence cannot exist without all other Christian graces: all virtues are of the same family; they all spring from Piety. Love to our neighbour can only flow from the fountain of love to God. You will easily comprehend, that a good action is not the cause of religion, but the effect only*: and religion does not direct its disciples to one or another good action,

* Vid. Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World.

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but



but to all, and every one, where occasion calls, and opportunity presents itself. May this, my brethren, be the nature of your Benevolence; may it be the universal Benevolence of the world! Then, and then only, may this be eminently termed The Age of Charity; and when your good works all flow from Piety, their reward shall be returned into your own hearts; and blessed, and for ever blessed shall ye be in the enjoyment of that reward in the kingdom of God!

S E R M O N III.

ON THE PRESENT STATE OF EDUCATION.

ISAIAH, chap. xxviii. verses 9, 10.

*Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom
shall he make to understand doctrine?
Them that are weaned from the milk,
and drawn from the breasts.*

*For precept must be upon precept, precept
upon precept; line upon line, line upon
line; here a little, and there a little.*

IN pursuing the plan which I have proposed for this holy season, viz. to examine into the present state of religion amongst us, I come now to speak upon the very important subject of EDUCATION. The present mode of Education I take to be

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at once a cause, and an evidence, of the decrease of religion. As the ground of my observations, I assume, as granted, the position of a celebrated Writer on this subject: "That of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their Education *." Our first habits stick by us through the remainder of our lives; or, at least, are thrown off with a painfulness of perseverance, or by a strength of conviction, very rarely to be met with. This is acknowledged to be the case in bad habits; and it is equally true in the important articles of faith and morals. There is no difficulty in shaking that faith which was never yet established, or in perverting that practice which was never yet directed right. But when we have been

* Locke on Education.

taught

taught the high authority of religion, and the duties of virtue, the modesty of our principles will be long disgusted with the sneer of the infidel, and proof against the temptations of the profligate. What we at first, perhaps, imbibe by imitation, we become attached to by habit, and gradually comprehend the principles of, with the progress of reason.

We acknowledge the necessity of teaching elements to children, which they cannot at present understand; but which the memory is stored with to be brought into future use. The first steps of Education are entirely of this nature. We teach the youthful mind, with infinite patience and perseverance, the principles of those arts or sciences, which are to be their future ornament, or the means of their future maintenance; and are content to lead them on, step by step, before they are able to

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comprehend and apply the first rules which they have learnt. It is equally necessary to teach the elements of religion in this way; to instruct young people in the grounds of their faith, by teaching them the history of man, as a being created by, and derived from, God, and by imprinting on their memories the account of man's fall and redemption;—To instruct them farther in the nature of their practice, as a necessary fruit of their faith—as consisting of duties commanded by God, which are to be exercised towards Him, towards our neighbour, and towards ourselves;—To instruct them in the general heads of these duties, in the reasons, authority, and necessity on which they are founded; in their respective degrees and variations; and, finally, in their particular application. Thus then, in religion, there is a great deal for a man to believe and to do;

do;—but before he can either believe or perform, he must comprehend; and, before he can comprehend, he must be instructed.

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In another point of view, than as an indispensable article of knowledge, it is absolutely necessary that the mind should be prepared for religion as early as it is possible. Our fallen nature is contrary to the purities of religion; the Christian religion is designed to correct this unhappy corruption; we must apply its powers, therefore, before the corruption has overspread and infected the whole mind, and before it is grown inveterate by time, habit, and example. The whole commerce of life is adverse to spirituality; early principles and early habits, therefore, are particularly necessary to establish a predilection for *that* which every thing we meet with, in the passage through life,

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endeavours to draw us aside from. For this purpose the Church has given us an elementary book of religion, entitled, "A Catechism," which is drawn from the purest fountain of truth, the Holy Scriptures themselves.

This mode of teaching religion has prevailed in the Christian church from the earliest period: we find the distinction of believers, or persons mature in Christian knowledge; and catechumens, or persons instructed in the gospel, by question and answer, so early as the first century. It is asserted, that a catechetical school was founded by St. Mark. In our church a form of catechism, and the enforcement of that mode of instruction, was the first care of the reformers; it made an important subject in many succeeding convocations; it is a principal article in the injunctions of King Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth; and there is a canon to this purpose

purpose now in force, which it would be well for religion, and the souls of men, if both ministers and hearers complied with.

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This catechism contains a comprehensive, but very clear account of religion for the benefit of the infant mind. Its uses, however, must depend much upon the diligence and the judgment of the instructor. The first thing to be done, is to imprint it on the memory; but this, though absolutely necessary, is only a step; it must frequently be explained, easily and familiarly, according to the degree and progress of the understanding. The youngest children thus instructed, cannot fail to have ideas of some kind on a subject, which is so repeatedly instilled into them; and of course, as they advance in years and understanding, these ideas must progressively become more accurate and extended.

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extended. The sacraments, indeed, which are not a part of the original church catechism, but were added in the beginning of King James the First's reign, are more abstruse, and are couched in terms which are almost metaphysical; but even these may, by the same mode of instruction, and where the former part has been well understood, be explained to the full comprehension of young people, before the time when the church directs them to be brought for confirmation.

I am now to enquire whether, in the present system of Education, they, who "are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breast, are taught knowledge, and made to understand doctrine;" whether there is "precept upon precept, and line upon line."

At the same time that we are to rejoice that there is an inclination manifested almost

almost throughout the kingdom to give this valuable instruction to the poor, we must also deeply lament, that the food which the more opulent are desirous of imparting to the souls of the poorer children, they withhold from their own. The wholesome custom, both of private and public catechizing is almost universally neglected in every class of people, above the most wretched and dependant. In the few instances, where it is thought necessary to force the form of words upon the minds of children, the explanation—the illustration is totally neglected. The catechism is thrown, as a dead load, upon their memories; as a cumbersome form of godliness, without one particle of its power. The best divines have ever considered catechizing not only as the most effectual mode of instruction, but as the
main,

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main support of religion in the world *.

Accordingly, I think we may fairly ascribe the decay of religion, in this nation, very much to the neglect of this mode of instruction. Throughout the different classes of Dissenters, there seems to be a greater appearance of religion, than amongst the members of the Establishment; and amongst these, I believe, you will almost universally find that a very assiduous attention is paid to some kind of catechetical instruction of their youth.

The earliest rudiments of religious knowledge must of course be imparted by parents; but in tracing the progress of information, it is much to be lamented, that religion makes no part of the system of school education. The higher we

* Vid. Bp. Horne's Charge, p. 12.

ascend

ascend in the scale of youthful seminaries, the less is this grand concern in human life attended to. While the best models of Grecian and Roman eloquence are carefully held up; while the classic page is unfolded line by line, with unwearied patience, the doctrines of God's universal knowledge, and universal providence, the history of man's fall and redemption, the accountableness of men for every word, thought, and deed, the whole tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ, as laid down in the Gospel; these things are left to chance, to be picked up any how, at any time, to be adopted or rejected as it may happen; so that the happy institution of Sunday schools becomes almost as necessary for the children of the more opulent, as for the children of the poor and miserable.

I have thought it important to my purpose to dwell thus long upon the state of religious

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religious education, because to this radical defect must be ascribed that relaxed discipline amongst youth, which I am now to take notice of, and which I consider as the bane of public and private happiness and virtue. The passage through human life is so perplexed with snares and difficulties, that some skill is surely necessary to steer us safe through this dangerous voyage. The skill here required is compounded of experience and comparison, weighed and digested by a sound understanding. Neither experience, nor comparison, nor mature understanding, are to be found amongst the advantages of early youth: on the contrary, when left to itself, its only guides are hasty impulse and airy imagination. These our forefathers thought were but rash and delusive directors at the outset of life, where its dangers are the most thronged, the most fatal,

fatal, and the most difficult to be guarded against. They, therefore, instituted restraints, which were salutary, but not irksome; and thought it necessary for young people to abide by the experience of others, till they had time and conversation with the world to gain experience of their own. These restraints are now broken down; this discipline is annihilated, and there is but one step, as it were, from infancy to manhood. For God's sake let us stop a moment to observe the consequence! A youth hardly emerged from childhood, is left to think and to act for himself, and to do what is right in his own eyes; a creature of impulse, without the power of looking forward to a consequence. The effervescence of a young mind, you say, is not to be checked, it ought to take its natural course, and will, in time, subside of itself:

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self: but mark the devastation, the irremediable havock, which is made before the season arrives of this natural subsidence. The unnecessary extravagance which children are indulged in, while they are in a state of pupilage, of one kind or other, gives them an encreasing taste for expence, as they grow up, beyond their incomes, and beyond the supplies which their injudicious parents have encouraged them to expect. Early dissipation, still strengthening by indulgence, excludes every notion of religion, and produces all the base train of dependance, and mean and fordid expedients to supply the vicious calls of extravagance. Life does not open and gradually expand before them; it bursts all at once upon them; the natural effervescence of the mind is aggravated; the appetites, the passions, and the gratification of them are all urged

on

I shall conclude with noticing two collateral causes of religion and immorality, which are strongly connected with my subject, and against which you cannot be too earnestly cautioned. The FIRST is, the present mode of treating religion, and treating sensual vices, by popular writers,

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whose works are suffered to be in the hands of young people at a very early age. Of this description of writers I shall speak in the strong, but just language of an author, who, in literature, stands unrivalled in modern times, and who glorified his Maker by employing it to the best purposes of religion and morality. “The wickedness of a loose or profane author is more atrocious than that of the giddy libertine, or drunken ravisher, not only because it extends its effects wider, as a pestilence that taints the air is more destructive than poison diffused in a draught, but because it is committed with cool deliberation. By the instantaneous violence of desire, a good man may sometimes be surprized before reflection can come to his rescue; when the appetites have strengthened their influence by habit, they are not easily resisted or suppressed; but for the frigid villany

villany of studious lewdness, for the calm malignity of laboured impiety, what apology can be invented? What punishment can be adequate to the crime of him who retires to solitudes for the refinements of debauchery; who tortures his fancy, and ransacks his memory, only that he may leave the world less virtuous than he found it; that he may intercept the hopes of the rising generation; and spread snares for the soul with more dexterity *?"

The SECOND thing I alluded to, and which at once strongly marks the loose manners of the age, and is a sad inducement to forget the severities of good principles, is that easy and familiar manner in which the grossest vices are talked over; and the little abhorrence which is shewn to the persons of the profligate and aban-

* Rambler, No. 77.

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done. What I have to say here (and with which I shall conclude), I design as a caution to that sex, whose modesty is their best and most engaging charm, a caution at which, perhaps, some of them, unsuspicious of their own danger, may shrink back with horror. In the licentiousness of modern manners, the vices of the fashionable and the great are talked of with as little reserve, and as little disgust, as if they were so many honorable pageants of their rank and station. Instead of being shocked at the crimes, and blushing at the errors of those who have fallen into the snares of the seducer, and are now braving decency with the ostentation of their vices, we hear the most delicate of their sex talking of them without hesitation or censure; we see them captivated with their elegancies, and, adopting the wanton graces of their attire, they acknowledge them

them the priestesses of fashion. I say not this for the sake of uttering unnecessarily an odious fact, but to imprint upon your minds this salutary truth which every day's observation, every newspaper you cast your eyes upon, give you sad illustrations of;—that the moment the horror and detestation of vice cease to be alive in your hearts, the moment you view it without aversion, you are but one link in the chain of morals above the depraved objects I allude to; and may, by the encouragement which such levity holds out to the betrayer, soon become partners in the same guilt. The first step is to endure vice,—the next (and almost certain one) is to embrace it,

May the grace of God shield you all from this danger, and preserve you pure and spotless to the day of his coming !

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THE HISTORY OF THE
LIFE OF
JAMES OGLETHORPE
BY
JOHN STURGES
IN TWO VOLUMES
VOLUME THE FIRST
LONDON
PRINTED BY J. STURGES
AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIELD
IN THE STRAND
1784

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S E R M O N I V.

ON THE PRESENT STATE OF PUBLIC AND
PRIVATE WORSHIP.

ISAIAH, chap. v. verse 12.

*The harp, and the viol, the tabret, and
pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but
they regard not the work of the Lord,
neither consider the operation of his
hands.*

THE Prophet in this chapter reproves
the Jews for their impiety and riotous
excesses, and denounces against them the
judgments of God for their ingratitude
towards him. Whoever hears the part of
the description which is recorded in the

Preached
at the
Asylum,
March 18,
1792.

text, cannot fail to apply it to the times in which we live. A nearer consideration of that disorderly state of things, which is there described, will make a very necessary part of the plan which I have already proposed.

In my last discourse I took a view of the present mode of education amongst us. From the defective state of this grand foundation of men's future conduct and discipline, we may, in a great measure, derive those evils of decreasing religion, which make up not the least painful part of this review. A relaxed youth must almost necessarily produce a licentious manhood. He who has been accustomed to run wild in his father's house, will be more likely to encrease, than correct, his dissipation and carelessness, when he is himself exalted to be the head of a family.

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The first instance of this continued relaxation of manners which I shall produce, is the neglect of family religion and family order. Religion is not an abstract speculation which can be detached from common life ; it is breathed into all our motives, and directs all our actions to a conformity to the will of God. We pray to our Father, which is in Heaven, " Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven." The life of angels in that pure and blessed state—that life which we one day hope to become partakers of, is a life of praise and adoration. The temper of mind which will constitute our bliss in Heaven must be acquired whilst we are sojourners on earth ; and if we are in no degree spiritualized here, we can have no capacity for the joys of another world, which are only the perfection of that which is spiritual. If therefore God is not in all our thoughts

in

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in the common conduct of our lives; if he appears not in the regularity and the decency of our families; if no incense of praise and adoration rises from our private altars, can we be said to have made any progress in that frame of mind, whose best and only enjoyment is hereafter to be found in the constant fervours of piety and devotion? Every appearance of this kind in our houses has long ceased amongst us; and it is to be numbered with the evidences of the decrease of religion, because I may again appeal to the recollection of those who are far advanced in life, for a different conduct in this article of Christian duty.

With the neglect of family devotion, we shall, of course, observe a difuse of family instruction in the duties of religion. We no longer regard the command of God himself, "These words which I command

mand thee this day, shall be in thy heart. And thou shalt teach them *diligently* unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou fittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up*:" We slight the dreadful judgment upon Eli for his neglect in this particular, " I have told him (saith the Lord), that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever†." Nor are we, on the other hand, encouraged to awaken from this spiritual torpor by the Almighty's approbation of Abraham,

* Deut. vi. 6, 7.

† 1 Sam. iii. 13, 14.

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he "shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him: for I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment *." Thus the threatnings of God on the one hand, and his gracious approbation on the other, are equally despised.

The effects of this relaxed discipline in private families are felt and lamented by every one of us; though but few give themselves the trouble to enquire into the sources of the evils we complain of; and still fewer adopt the glorious singularity of reforming them, as far as belongs to their own individual conduct and influence.

We see children growing up headstrong

* Genesis xviii. 18, 19.

and undutiful; we see them disgracing themselves and their families, and avenging (as it were by a judicial dispensation) the neglect of their parents in their earlier years, by bringing down their "grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." We find servants idle, extravagant, and dishonest; we complain of their vices and their slothfulness, forgetting how much of the blame may be brought home to ourselves, inasmuch as we give them no opportunity of knowing what their duty is, of acquainting themselves with the Almighty Being, who hath commanded that duty, with the promises he hath made to obedience, and the dreadful threatnings he hath denounced against disobedience. Nay, perhaps, we go farther; and I fear it too often happens, that we not only afford them no opportunity of knowing what is *right*, but by our own example (and we all know

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the influence of example upon an inferior and dependant) we lead them most fatally *wrong*. Thus then each family, instead of contributing its portion to the stock of the public welfare, pours out a swarm of locusts to prey upon the vitals of social virtue and happiness; it sends forth a volume of pestilential breath to corrupt and contaminate the fair blossoms which remain.

Religion, I have before observed, is invariably consistent; it cannot be put on and off at pleasure; but if we feel it at all, we must feel it at all times, and on all occasions. If we do not acknowledge it at home, it can hardly be expected that we should acknowledge it abroad; if we disown it for six days in the week, we shall not be very careful to profess it on the seventh. Hence though the Almighty has enjoined us to "bind his commandments

ments for a sign upon our hands, and as frontless between our eyes *," yet it will not be surprizing that we should neglect to "keep holy the Sabbath Day." The Sabbath, were it nothing else, is, by being a day of peculiar dedication to God, a day of separation from worldly business, and a security for preserving alive the recollection of religion.

Let us briefly enquire then in what manner this day is observed amongst us.

It ought to be universally, with every rank and description of Christians, kept holy as a day of public worship. It would be a species of effrontery in any man to pretend to religion, who does not join in communion, in that place, where the body of Christians pay their gratitude to

* Deut. vi. 8.

God,

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God; where they make known all their wants; where they are invited to a holy sacrament, which not only commemorates the inestimable price of their salvation, but which also promises many precious blessings and advantages, and where they hear all which is to instruct and confirm them in their duty. And yet every man knows more of his friends and acquaintance, who either entirely absent themselves from public worship, or at least but seldom join in it, than who are constant attendants in the courts of the Lord's house. View the different places of divine worship, and how many are almost entirely deserted, and what great numbers are but thinly and sparingly attended! Examine, for instance, any district of the great metropolis at the hour of public prayer, and how small a proportion will be found in the discharge of their duty! And even of those,

those, who make some pretensions to seriousness, if they assemble themselves together on one part of the Sabbath day, they seem to consider it as a meritorious effort of piety, and as a fair compromise for spending the rest of it without the shadow of a religious employment.

The Sabbath is likewise commanded to be kept holy as a day of rest: "In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man servant, and thy maid servant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates." Let us consider the manner in which the Sabbath is observed in this view of it. Do we rest from *pleasure*? It is true that there is a suspension of public amusements on that day; but it is likewise true, that there is less and less suspension of pleasureable engagements in private houses. The business of the fashionable and the gay admits

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of no interval; it impels them to the brink of eternity, before they have leisure to allow the intrusion of a serious thought. Hence then on this day, which would otherwise be an expletive in their record of time, more of those momentary unsatisfactory visits, which the decorums of the world require from its disciples, are paid and returned, than on any other day in the week. The public walks, which are the very bane of sober meditation after a pious exercise, are thronged even to inconvenience, not by those who snatch a few delicious hours of recreation from a week's laborious and sedentary industry, but by *them* whose leisure is their misfortune, and God grant it may not be their eternal condemnation! The engagements of the evening suffer no interruption; and so rapid has been the progress of this part of the evil, and so barefaced
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and atrocious is it become, that it can be described in no terms which will not have the appearance of invective. It is but a few years since that one part of an evening's amusement, which requires no explanation, was very rarely indulged on a Sabbath Day; and then only by persons who were not the most respectable, and certainly not without censure. It was then a modest vice, and shrunk from public observation. But mankind, to do them justice, have erased from their catalogue the sin of hypocrisy; and think it unnecessary to gloss over a vice, which they have once brought themselves to indulge, with the varnish of decency. One great misery of this evil is, that, in the natural course of example, it descends to those classes of people amongst whom till lately it was almost unknown. Religion kept its ground amongst the middle

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ranks of men for many years after it had been rejected by their superiors; but, alas! it is now receding even from this retreat, and God knows where it will be found at the tremendous day of enquiry into our faith and practice! Till now, no man of this description dared to have profaned the Sabbath in this way, unless he had already parted with every other valuable feature of his character, and feared not the severe animadversions of his neighbour. It is now, however, no longer the appropriate vice of any particular description of people; but belongs too generally to all.

Nor is the Sabbath more a day of rest from *business*, than it is from pleasure. It was an institution of mercy, as well as sacrifice; but how have we defrauded ourselves, and how have we defrauded others of that temporary rest from their labours, which

which in wisdom, as well as goodness, is here conceded to the human body and mind ! Under one pretence or other many trades are on this day continued, and much labour is performed. Professional engagements are made much more frequently than the world at large is aware of. Books are settled and arranged, as if the commerce of this world left no room for duties which are to prepare us for the next; and as if the encrease of opulence was a sufficient apology for not asking upon it the blessing of God, who is the author and giver of all good things. It is become a day of travelling and of intercourse between distant places, in a degree which heretofore was not heard of. Thus the sacred inclosure of the Sabbath is on all sides broken down; and the time is rapidly hastening, when neither man nor beast will derive advantage from it.

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“The Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it,” are sounds wasted upon the deafened ear; and the obedience to this divine authority is consigning to oblivion, with the servile superstitions of darker ages. “The harp, and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord.”

Beside the disuse of family devotion, and family instruction, and the neglect and profanation of the Sabbath, I intended to have noticed other instances of relaxed discipline in private life, if the time would have permitted. As it is, I can only lament that men indulge themselves in a levity and prophaneness of conversation before their children and dependents, which in itself is far from being innocent, and, in its consequences to public morality, is truly lamentable. Much also is it

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to be deplored, that we too easily admit into our families, on account of their pleasant manners and convivial qualifications, men of vicious or suspected characters. Nor is it less an evil, that while we expect a great deal of perfection from others, we are apt to be extremely defective in our own examples.

Before I conclude, I cannot but advert very particularly to one consequence of the melancholy facts which I have now stated. With all our vices, with all our religious declensions, there is an attempt at a degree of reformation. The institution of Sunday Schools is a most happy expedient to teach the infant poor the principles of religion and morality. But, I pray you, let us consider, that when we have taught them that particular things are sacred and inviolable, will they not hereafter expect to find that they are as binding upon us

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as upon them? When they are transplanted from these pious seminaries into our families, or into the sphere of observing our manners, will they not be disappointed to find that our own precepts have no efficacy upon our own practice? When they observe that their superiors have no religion, the first speculative principles which they have been taught will never be sufficient to preserve them in the belief of a God, and a judgment to come. When they observe their superiors give way to the most licentious passions, the precepts which they have heard of soberness, temperance, and chastity, will never restrain them from extravagance and profusion; and consequently from unlawful means to supply the necessities of folly and vice. How inconsistent is our conduct, that we ourselves should counteract that which we ourselves have done!

O my brethren, let us remember that this scene of riot and excess must quickly have an end, and the grave will close over us with that volume of sins, which must one day be spread before the judgment seat of Christ. If we have any notions of a future state of retribution, on any principles, we can never divest ourselves of the apprehension, that we must account not only for what we have done; but also for what we have occasioned others to do, either by our example or importunity; and for what we might have prevented. At that day, then, when the ponderous tomb shall open, and the grave give up her dead; when no created being throughout unbounded space shall sleep, but all, wherever scattered, or however minutely mouldered into dust, shall appear before Heaven's judgment seat; at that day when an eternal and irrevocable doom shall hang upon
a moment;

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a moment; when even they who are purified in the blood of the Lamb shall tremble in awful expectation, how shall we be prepared to stand before that tribunal where justice will not be blinded, and where pity will not intercept her blow? Heavy-laden with the burden of our own iniquities; surrounded by a miserable group, who, but for our example, might have been innocent and happy; who, but for our neglect, might have worn their golden crowns, and tuned their harps to notes of eternal joy; how shall we meet that eye which will dart through the inmost soul! How shall we abide the sentence which condemns us to the gnawings of that worm of conscience which never dieth, and to live for ever amidst the groans and reproaches of those whom we have corrupted! With such a view, to think of dying must be distraction: Good God! from our giddy
scenes

scenes of dissipation, how dare we look forward to the great day of wailing, lamentation, and woe!

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On the contrary, how bright would be our prospects of futurity, were we conscious that we were not only proceeding ourselves in the path of life, but leading on those around us to the high prize of our calling in Christ Jesus! In death, how delightful would be our hopes! In our resurrection, how glorious would be our waking from the sleep of death, could we present a shining train before the throne of the Lamb, with this triumphant reflection, "Of them which thou gavest me, have I lost none *!" Then would these happy words of our approving Judge strike upon our enraptured ears, "Well done, thou

* John xviii. 9.

good

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good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord *!

“O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end †!”

* Matt. xxv. 23. † Deut. xxxii. 29.

S E R M O N V.

THE GOSPEL A SYSTEM OF FAITH AS WELL
AS MORALS.

I CORINTHIANS i. 30.

*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of
God is made unto us wisdom, and righte-
ousness, and sanctification, and redemp-
tion.*

IN this verse the Apostle gives us the true description of Jesus Christ, as the author and the head of our religion; and whoever does not receive him under this character, can have no pretensions to the title of a Christian. He is our *wisdom*, in that he has taught us the true knowledge of God and the means of rendering ourselves

Preached
at the
Asylum,
Mar. 25,
1792.

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selves acceptable to him; "The world by its wisdom knew not God *." He is our *righteousness*, in that his atonement is imputed on repentance for pardon of our sins; he is peculiarly our righteousness, because "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain †." He is our *sanctification*, making us holy, qualifying us for that pure state to which he has called us, destroying the body of sin, and giving us a new spirit of holiness and righteousness; "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ‡! The blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, shall purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God ||." He is our *redemption*, in that he hath redeemed us, from the do-

* 1 Corinth. i. 21.

† Heb. x. 10.

† Gal. ii. 21.

|| Heb. ix. 14.

minion of sin and Satan, from the curse of death, and to the resurrection of eternal life. Thus, then, you observe that in the Christian religion there is something to believe as well as to do; and *that* belief is the root and spring of our performance.

I observed, at the outset of these Discourses, that it is the fashion to “resolve christianity into a mere system of morals.” But my text, and every page of that Gospel which we so easily accommodate to our own purposes, tells us that it is something more; it is a system which leads us to the knowledge of God; which offers us pardon and reconciliation, which are to be obtained by no other means; which produces good works as a consequence of knowing the will of God—as a condition of pardon; and then it conducts us to the *end*, to which every thing else is but a mean—Salvation, everlasting life, and happiness

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pinefs after death in the prefence of God, and in the communion of faints and angels.

No man can be a Chriftian without good morals; becaufe the life—the power of religion is purity and holinefs: but morality is a fyftem of duties for this life only, of duties to our neighbour, and duties to ourfelves; and fo long as thefe duties are performed, fo long as the intercourfes between man and man are fair and honourable, it matters not whether God and a future ftate are taken into the account. But, my brethren, what page of the Bible is it which tells you that thefe duties make up the whole of religion? Does not the fame text which directs you to do “juftice and to love mercy,” direct you alfo to “walk humbly with your God *?” Does not the fame unerring au-

* Mic. vi. 8.

thority

thority which says "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," say also, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind *?" Are we not told that "the just shall live by faith †?" that after all we are "unprofitable servants ‡," and must finally rest on the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ only? Faith in the Gospel, that it is the word of truth; Faith in Jesus Christ, that he spake "as one having authority ||;" Faith in the promises and the threatenings of Christianity, these indeed make the best foundation of that consistent Christian morality which is exercised in every opportunity, and is superior to every temptation.

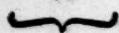
Let us not then deceive ourselves, and confound Christianity and morality as one

* Matt. xxii. 37, 39.

† Rom. i. 17.

‡ Luke, xvii. 10.

|| Matt. vii. 29.

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and the same thing. Do you imagine that under the law, with all its corruptions, there were no moral men? Do you suppose that in all the ages of Pagan antiquity there were no moral men? Do you apprehend that at this day there are no moral men to be found under the banner of Mahomet? Nay, have you not read of moral men who have professedly written against Christianity? Why, then, my brethren, if your morality is your religion, what will you make your distinction from Pagans, Jews, Turks, and Infidels?

If you pay any respect to the New Testament you must receive it all, or you must reject it all: while it all stands upon the same authority, every part must be received and embraced alike as the word of God. If we believe that we are bound by the New Testament to be honest, the very same authority binds us with still higher

higher obligation to look up to Jesus as
“ the author and finisher of our faith *.”

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Unless we implicitly believe with all our hearts, and with all our souls, all those doctrines which are to be found in every page of the gospel; doctrines which depend not on human glosses and comments, which are not taught by the implication and construction of human learning; unless we believe that we cannot otherwise be saved, I know not on what ground of gospel authority we are restrained from the violation of every duty to our neighbour and to ourselves.

That the Gospel contains a purer code of morals than has ever before been delivered, is, I believe, on all hands acknowledged; nor is it less true, that it affords the best and only motives of morality,

* Heb. xii. 2.

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both of thought as well as action. It may be sufficient for the purposes of human life (as has no doubt been evident in many heathen instances), that men's actions and outward demeanour are fair and honest; but we have a much stronger motive for inward integrity, which is the best security for our honourable dealings, in the belief that there is a God who searches the heart, who knows our thoughts, and weighs in the balance every working of the mind.

The native beauty of virtue has frequently been proposed as a sufficient inducement to a nearer acquaintance with her. This is a motive adapted to pure and spotless beings, but not to frail and sinful men; because on this principle we are left at liberty to embrace a vice instead of a virtue, if (as it sometimes happens) she puts on, of the two, the more attractive

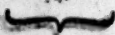
tive blandishments. The surer motive, I apprehend, will be found in the gospel doctrine of a state of future retribution.

“ He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him *.” As it applies to men, how beautiful a connection is here formed between motives and actions ! As it applies to God, how satisfactorily is he justified as the moral Governor of the universe ! Convinced of this doctrine, and dreading the terrors of future vengeance, the bad man dares not draw forth the latent wickedness of his heart. Confident that God is just, and encouraged by invaluable rewards which he has in most assured reversion, the man of low degree unweariedly performs the severest duties of his station. Resting on this

* Heb. xi. 6.

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faith, as on an anchor which never faileth, we behold on one hand the unmerited success of some, and on the other we feel our own miscarriages with the calm dignity of men whose best hopes are still unshaken by the agitations and convulsions of this transitory scene. While Heaven opens to our view, and angels beckon us to its bright abodes, misfortune patiently reclines on the bosom of contentment, with eyes directed to that pure felicity, where tears no longer flow, and the sorrows of the heart no longer throb. On this principle only, that the life of man ends not here, but that when he has thrown off the mortal husk he shall stand an accountable creature at the bar of his Maker; on this principle only, that human things are to be considered simply as they bear a relation to another state of just retribution, can we reconcile the innumerable

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ble moral difficulties with which we are surrounded in the world. Were the present state to be our "continuing city;" were this our only concern, how hard would it be for the pious mind to assure itself that God is wise, and holy, and just, and good! But considering ourselves as probationary beings; considering our connection with eternity; considering God as never losing sight of us in any period of our existence, and conducting us to an end which is concealed only by the veil of mortality, every difficulty arising from the untoward events of this world vanishes before us; and we acknowledge, in the full confidence of faith and hope, this truth, so often quoted and so little understood, "Whatever is, is right."

Possessed of these inestimable truths, let us not, my brethren, narrow the grand and glorious scope of the evangelical dispensation

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penetration into an humble system of human ethics; but let us receive it as the treasure of life and immortality, revealed to us "in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

It has often been objected against this scheme of the Gospel, as I have described it, that, in general, the lives of Christians, and the lives of unbelievers and sceptics, have no discriminating features. We cannot but admit the fact in a very considerable degree. We see men who profess not to think at all about religion, and men who profess themselves to be Christians, equally engaged in the common concerns of life. They pay the same attention to business; they are alike engaged in the hurry of pleasure and dissipation. Their Christianity is merely a profession of the lips; the Bible cannot be said

said to be the strict rule of their practice; they are conformed to this world; and they pursue its interests to the utmost, as if they had no expectations of any thing hereafter.

It is certainly a misfortune that this is the case, and contrary to the spirit of our religion; whose power should pervade every action and every concern in this world, and should separate us in our lives and conversations, as a peculiar people, from every unbeliever; from every scoffer at the Gospel, and every careless disciple of a faith, whose energy he does not feel. This is an evil, however, derived from our considering Christianity in its inferior view; merely as a moral law. If we embraced it in all its parts, like men in earnest, our lives must be holy and spiritual. There is not a doctrine of the Gospel which does not apply to common life,

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life. " If we are to be wise and holy, as the new born sons of God, we can no otherwise be so, but by renouncing every thing that is vain and foolish in every part of our common life. If we are to be in Christ new creatures, we must shew that we are so, by having new ways of living in the world. If we are to follow Christ, it must be in our common way of spending every day. The virtues and holy tempers of Christianity are not ours, unless they be the virtues and tempers of our ordinary conversation. So that Christianity is so far from leaving us to live in the common ways of life, conforming to the folly of customs, and gratifying the passions and tempers which the spirit of the world delights in—it is so far from indulging us in any of these things, that all its virtues which it makes necessary to salvation, are only so many ways of living
above

above, and contrary to the world in all the common actions of our lives. If our common life is not a common course of humility, self-denial, renunciation of the world, poverty of spirit, and heavenly affection, we do not live the lives of Christians *."

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My brethren, this is not fanatical; you cannot open a page of the New Testament without reading that this is the doctrine of the Gospel of which you profess yourselves to be believers. The truth is, that very few of us consider what are the doctrines of the Gospel, and what is their awful import. We are Christians for the same reason that we might have been Pagans or Mahometans, because our fore-

* Law's Serious Call, which I earnestly recommend to every man's attention, who wishes to understand the Christian religion, and to lead a life agreeably to it.

fathers

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fathers were so. Let us try this assertion by a single doctrine, *viz.* the immortality of the soul, as revealed by Jesus Christ. If we were firmly impressed with a belief that we were to live for ever, and that our future existence depends upon our conduct here, is it possible that any man of common reason should so far forget the natural laws of self-preservation, as to do any thing which would hazard the happiness of that existence? We have no way of judging of any man's conviction, but by his acting according to it. If we believe that our lives are in danger, we are earnestly employed in preserving them; if we believe that the goods of this world are necessary and convenient to us, we are earnest, and laborious, and anxious in the means of acquiring them. Whatever interest, whatever concern we think worthy of our attention, we soon manifest our eagerness

eagerness in the pursuit of it. But who discovers our earnestness in the pursuit of immortality? We do not see through that very brittle texture which divides the two worlds, and therefore we leave it to chance. A rational man is anxious about every thing in proportion to its value. Now, if we believe that our lot in a future state depends upon ourselves; that, in respect of its duration, this life is but as a point of time; according to every analogy of common sense, to which life should we pay the greatest attention? If we believe, as we profess, not only in a state of future existence, but that it is a state of joy and felicity; that in God's "presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore *;" and that no cares, no griefs, no chequered events shall trouble this pure fountain of felicity, would

* Psalm xvi, 11.

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it be possible that we should be so anxious about every trifling concern of this perishable scene, and so indifferent about that rich treasure from which we are but so little removed? Would it be possible that we should be so fascinated with the scattered blossoms of transient delights, which are to be found in the paths of this world, that our greatest dread and apprehension is to leave them? Alas! if we were to try the sincerity of our belief in this doctrine of the soul's immortality, by the rule of our conduct in human concerns, I fear we should be tempted to class Christians amongst "the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection *."

I am now arrived at the conclusion of that plan which I proposed at the commencement of this holy season. I have delivered these discourses with as warm a

* Matt. xxii. 23.

desire

desire of discharging my duty to my hearers, as ever actuated the labours of man. And now I most solemnly appeal to you, is not the state of religion amongst us such as I have described it to be? and if there is one particle of truth in the faith which we profess, is there not an urgent necessity for reformation? I call, then, upon you, one and all, by your faith in Jesus Christ, by every precious hope you derive from him, to begin, in yourselves and your families, that reformation which can alone appease the displeasure of God, and save your own souls. The times in which we live require every effort of example. It is not sufficient to steal through life without observation, to practice silent virtues, to cherish an inward piety, which has no witness but God and our own hearts; but our "light must so shine before men, that they may see our
good

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good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven *." The religion of Jesus Christ is more and more disregarded; the whole mission of the Gospel is at stake; and the preacher of the glad tidings of salvation, of glory to God, and good-will towards men, may say as he did at the first hour of his mission, "He that is not with me is against me †." If we really believe in "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ‡," we shall eagerly do any thing to obtain it; we shall gladly sacrifice every thing to be worthy of it. Let us not then fear the foolish imputation of fanaticism; it is impossible that our zeal and piety towards God should be too fervent; that our justice should be too strict, our charity too enlarged towards men; and that our caution over our own

* Matt. v. 16.

† Matt. xii. 30.

‡ Philip iii. 14.

conduct

conduct should be too guarded and exemplary. Let the gay smile, and the thoughtless disregard; it is the only cross which in these days we have occasion to take up, and follow our master: and let us not be ashamed to bear this cross, till we shall behold it at the last day the triumphant banner in Heaven, when we shall be partakers of *his* glory who for our sakes suffered death upon it on earth.

At that day, my brethren, I pray for you and I pray for myself, that when the fashion of this world is passed away, when Christ shall be "all in all*," when he shall have "put all enemies under his feet†," we may be found worthy of the happy sentence, "come ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world‡."

* 1 Cor. xv. 28. † 1 Cor. xv. 25. ‡ Matt. xxv. 34.

...though be too general and common
...the very same, and the thought
...the only one which
...these days we have occasion to take up
...our own eyes, and let us not be
...to read the book, till we find
...at the last day the triumph
...in Heaven, when we shall be par-
...of a glorious for our sake this
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...that day, my brethren, I pray for
...and I pray for myself, that when the
...of this world is passed away, when
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...feet," we may be found worthy of the
...happy "universe," "some blessed children
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S E R M O N VI.

ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS.

PROVERBS, xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go:
and when he is old, he will not depart
from it.*

THE world, in which the Almighty Author of our being has at present placed us, is to be considered as a state of probation for another, more perfect and eternal. The nature of this probation is *faith* in his holy word, and *obedience* to his revealed will. But as the happiness of his creatures is the moving principle of all that God does towards them, and all that

Preached
at the
Asylum,
March 29,
1789.

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he requires from them; he has made their duties towards each other a very important and extensive part of this *obedience*; and has inseparably connected *social* and *religious* obligations. Considering therefore social morality and piety as being made, by the commands of the Gospel, the same things, I apprehend that I cannot more worthily discharge my sacred office at this time, than by directing your attention to the two leading relative duties of *parents* and *children*. And these shall be considered in their order.

The duty of parents may be considered in three points of view; either as it is taught us by *nature*; or as it has been constituted by the *customs of nations*; or commanded us by the *revealed will of God*.

If we consider it as the institute of *nature*; we shall find, that it is one of its
most

most inviolable laws. The congenial feelings of every good and tender parent whom I am now addressing prove (I trust) that the exceptions to this instinctive disposition are very rare; and, perhaps, no where to be found, but where the fond emotions of a parent's love are sunk in the remorseful fears of shame, dishonour, and infamy.

If we view it as constituted *by the customs of nations*; we shall find that this duty requires not only care, protection, and maintenance in the helpless stages of infancy and childhood; but also sound and good education. It is in this view required of the parent to lay the foundation of all that is to be reciprocally useful and profitable to his child, as a member of the community; and to endeavour to root out all that appears hostile to his social relation.

If we farther examine the duty of
H 3 parents,

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parents, as commanded by the *will of God* revealed through *Jesus Christ*, we shall find it improved to its highest excellence; enforced as a religious obligation; and the motive of it augmented by the consideration, that God's moral government of the universe is very essentially promoted by it.

From the *obligations* to parental duty, we proceed to instances of its *operation*. The first example—as it is found in the mere care and preservation of animal life, and (in this instance) the laws of all civilized nations have enforced the dictates of religion and conscience—is not properly the subject of discussion in this place. But the instances of duty left more widely to parental discretion, and yet of infinitely greater importance in every possible point of view, begin with the first dawnings of intellect; when the understanding is to be carefully

carefully opened, the reason instructed, the mind directed to important objects, and planted with useful knowledge, and the manners and habits established; when the judgment of conscience begins to discover itself, and moral obligations are to be inculcated, and their extent and distinctions carefully marked out. To fail in duty here, is an injury of the greatest magnitude; and can never be repaired in any succeeding stage of life. Neglect here is ruin: It is adding to the numbers of society an useless, or rather a noxious member: It is giving (in all probability) to an unfortunate Being an existence without happiness, without honour, without virtue: It is dooming a soul, which is to live hereafter and for ever, to eternal wretchedness. The good or evil of an immortal existence then depends upon a parent's care; and his reason, conscience,

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generosity, religion, the interests of this world, the happiness of the next, all unite, and cement the obligation.

As an additional motive to the exercise of these parental offices, I would observe that it is the best ground of filial affection, reverence and obedience. It may justly be doubted whether the mere communication of being is any natural ground of filial duty. This communication was accidental, bearing no regard to the object it hath brought into the world: It seems therefore to be the after care and kindness which constitute the obligation. To have been brought out of nothing into existence may be a blessing, the choicest gift of Heaven; it may be a calamity, to be lamented through endless ages; whatever it may be, it certainly is involuntary. Now as much of the complexion of this existence will depend on the care, attention,

attention, and judgment of the parent; I think that parent, who disdains and rejects these offices, has no natural claim upon his child for gratitude and reverence.

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In this view of parental duty, mankind, I apprehend, are generally agreed; it is in the manner of discharging their duty, that they will be principally found to differ. On this account, I think it is important to our subject to introduce a few observations on the nature and exercise of that authority, which reason and religion have vested in parents; and which, as they are the authors of the being, and the sole supporters, protectors, and guides of their children, is very full and extensive. In the exercise of this authority nature points to mildness and tenderness; it seems rather to *allow of severity*, as the last resort of necessity, than ever to *command it*. Indeed

one

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one would rather be inclined to believe, that were the emotions of a parent's love never restrained, their future hopes would be more completely blasted by excessive indulgence, than by cold neglect; and the engaging beauties of artless childhood would probably run wild for want of the training hand of judicious discipline. And yet it frequently happens, that where the duty of parental care is fully admitted, parents endeavour to produce the great ends of it by severity and force, rather than by kindness and address. In these cases, generally speaking, the event will be disappointment. Every endeavour to inculcate virtue, to form manners, to instil instruction, accompanied with unmelting rigour, is like scattering good seed upon a soil chilled by eternal frosts. Severity can neither induce the love of virtue, nor hatred of vice; it terrifies in the season of infant

infant dependence, but leaves no operative impression, when the reins of parental government are thrown off. Nay, it will defeat its own ends; for children, under such a discipline, being thwarted in all their little plans and amusements, and perpetually rendered uncomfortable, will soon consider their parents as their bitter enemies. Hence their respect and duty will last only with their fears; and when they are out of the reach of a *parent's* severity, they will cease to feel or to express a *child's* affection. Severity too being generally as equally directed to childish negligence, as to vicious propensities, moral distinctions are entirely destroyed by it; it imposes a mask of hypocrisy; but gives no genuine sense of virtue. Severity *even successfully* cherishes the infirmities of human nature; for being violently directed against what children are inclined to, and

in

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in favour of what they dislike, their distaste to what is good is only confirmed; and their faulty propensities are strengthened, instead of being eradicated. It damps every generous principle; it checks every noble exertion of the mind; and stamps both personal manners, and the habit of thinking, with fear and servility.

Having said thus much on the subject of extreme severity, I trust my meaning will not be so perverted, as to make me the advocate of excessive indulgence. The effects, in both cases, are equally fatal: It is of little consequence either to the child, or to the parent's conscience, whether his happiness and respectability have been destroyed by tyranny; or whether he is suffered to ruin himself (under a feeble authority) for want of due restraints. The authority of a parent is on no account to be relaxed in any of its useful

ful energies; it is to be exercised with vigilance and assiduity against the caprices, the wayward humours, and the vicious propensities of children: But its most effectual exercise will be found in the influence of reasoning, persuasion, and conviction; and not under the pressure of austere, blind commands. Against both extremes the word of God hath left us salutary cautions. "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged *." "Ye Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture, and admonition of the Lord; having them in subjection with all gravity †."

From these general observations I now proceed to a more particular consideration of the text. By "training up a child,"

* Colossians, iii. 21. † Ephes. vi. 4. 1 Tim. iii. 4.

is certainly to be understood in the first place *early education*. The necessity of this will be best understood by a view of the sad effects which follow on the neglect of it. Where the first dawnings of reason are not directed to worthy objects; where it is neglected to store the yet vacant and unbiassed judgment with just conceptions; and where the infant powers of understanding are not enlarged and exercised by useful instruction; where these (I say) are neglected, it is hardly within the bounds of possibility at any other stage of life to repair the first mistake. The reason, the judgment, the understanding, are already occupied by the objects of chance; and, as early impressions are always strong, the page and the precept of future instruction will be seen through a stained medium; and all the best exertions of the mind will be irreparably weakened.

Thus,

Thus, in the lowest classes of the community, where the wretched offspring is thrown forth to wander in the streets, and to consume the days of childhood in idleness and infant profligacy; where the budding powers of the body have not been expanded by early labour; in these instances, not even the iron hand of want can overcome the inactivity of indolence, and induce the habits of honest and continued industry. But as *necessity* will force them upon seeking some means of subsistence; so *idleness* will direct their choice to such as require the least and shortest exertions of labour; though at the expence of honesty and every moral obligation. Hence, that scene of theft, violence, and abandoned villainy, which baffles the utmost vigilance of justice: To this are to be ascribed the idle, lazy, effeminate employments, which disgrace the very character of manhood: And from
hence

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hence originates the increasing number of importunate vagrants; who, like morbid excrescences in the body, drain the useful members of their nourishment, and are yet too large to be cut off.

Nor are the effects of neglected education less fatal and extensive, in the middle rank of people. Where in this class childhood has been the scene of idleness and indulgence—where the passions have been suffered to run wild for want of restraint—where the little impertinencies of that age have rather been encouraged as amusing, than checked as encreasing evils—and where parental fondness has feared to check improper desires and wayward humours—where this has been the case, the mind is prepared, neither by inclination, nor instruction, for a serious attention either to a trade or profession. A taste for extravagance, an inability of application,

plication, are contracted; and hence arises the whole melancholy scene of fraud and bankruptcies, ruin and disgrace to families, and the *grey hairs* of broken-hearted parents, sent down "with sorrow to the grave."

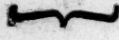
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And if we view the consequences of neglected education amongst those of the higher classes of society, who have all the advantages of rank and fortune; the scene will not be found to brighten upon us. In the two first instances, the good of the community can only be promoted by the honest attention of the individual to his private interest. But they who are in more elevated stations are called upon to make the public good their primary objects: to every glowing sentiment of patriotism, they are called upon to add the wisdom of political information; and to the obligations of wise legislation they are

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 hence originates the increasing number of importunate vagrants; who, like morbid excrescences in the body, drain the useful members of their nourishment, and are yet too large to be cut off.

Nor are the effects of neglected education less fatal and extensive, in the middle rank of people. Where in this class childhood has been the scene of idleness and indulgence—where the passions have been suffered to run wild for want of restraint—where the little impertinencies of that age have rather been encouraged as amusing, than checked as encreasing evils—and where parental fondness has feared to check improper desires and wayward humours—where this has been the case, the mind is prepared, neither by inclination, nor instruction, for a serious attention either to a trade or profession. A taste for extravagance, an inability of ap-
plication,

plication, are contracted; and hence arises the whole melancholy scene of fraud and bankruptcies, ruin and disgrace to families, and the *grey hairs* of broken-hearted parents, sent down "with sorrow to the grave."

And if we view the consequences of neglected education amongst those of the higher classes of society, who have all the advantages of rank and fortune; the scene will not be found to brighten upon us. In the two first instances, the good of the community can only be promoted by the honest attention of the individual to his private interest. But they who are in more elevated stations are called upon to make the public good their primary objects: to every glowing sentiment of patriotism, they are called upon to add the wisdom of political information; and to the obligations of wise legislation they are

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required individually to contribute the sanction of a good example. If then the first years of young men of fashion are spent in dissipation and profligacy; and rank and fortune are considered as dispensations from all regular application, except to fashionable vices; the advantages of their stations are lost to the community, and the very opposite effects are produced. The general character of every other rank of society will, in great measure, receive its impression from that of the higher classes: Every man therefore of exalted rank, who in himself holds out the example of dissipation, immorality, and irreligion, instead of a benefactor, and an ornament, becomes a monster in the community he belongs to.

By "training up a child" is farther to be understood *religious education*; the wisest and most important branch of all useful education.

education. Religion, independent of its being an indispensable duty towards God, and the indispensable condition of eternal happiness, is the most prudential guard of *present* comfort and prosperity. If we teach our children to refer their motives and their actions to the all-seeing eye of Heaven, to the infallible rule of God's word, and to the severe test of the last great day; if we do this, we give them an inexhaustible source of genuine happiness, which does not obstruct an honest and virtuous attention to any worldly interest, and yet secures a peace of mind—a pleasure of approving conscience, unconnected with the world. We give to a being, who is a part of us, and dearer to us than ourselves, all the means of honour and comfort through the probationary course of the present life; and prepare

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him for a blessed and glorious existence through the countless ages of eternity.

By “training up a child,” is, in the last place, to be understood, the bringing him up under the influence of a *pious and virtuous example*. And this is a branch of duty more indispensable than all others; because without this, every other parental duty will be in a great degree ineffectual. “Go before your children in every thing that is good: instruct and lead them too in the way to Heaven.” Though poor, you will give them a noble fortune, if you teach them to be good Christians*.”

If you would have your children good and virtuous, your own lives must be the faithful comments on your precepts. The young and inexperienced mind is more

* Ogden’s Sermons on the Ten Comandments, Ser. XII.

easily led by example, than taught by instruction; and what example can be so persuasive, as that of the parents, to whom children look up with the gratitude due to continued obligations? Precept without example is a mockery, which cannot even impose upon *children*. Reason, or rather cunning, is wonderfully early in its operation, when it argues on the side of passion and inclination; and a very young child will think it indifferent, whether he listens to that instruction, which even the person who gives it, does not think of sufficient importance to make the rule of his own conduct. Would you inculcate piety? then be yourselves religious. Would you discourage pride and arrogance? be yourselves humble, mild, and condescending: Would you recommend temperance, chastity, justice, and universal benevolence? these then must be

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the moral graces of your own character.

But if, on the contrary, your children receive the very first impressions of the holy name of God in irreverent introductions of it into common discourse, in asseverations on insignificant occasions, and blasphemous expressions of it in the excesses of passion;—that holy name, which ought never to be mentioned, but as the subject of adoration and gratitude, as the incitement to all virtue, and the restraint of all vice;—if levity, immorality, or the reverse of any virtues I have mentioned; if any of these is the common example of your families, even *children* will consider all your grave lectures as grimace, and perceive that your concern for virtue is but a shallow counterfeit. And what shall we say of that parent, who brings up his child in the poisonous infection of vicious example?—Who taints his innocent, and yet unspotted

unspotted mind, with the breath of impiety, and seduces every ingenuous and virtuous principle by observations of immorality and sinful pleasures? Such a parent turns his child adrift upon the wide, uncertain ocean of the world, without religion, as his anchor of safety, or prudence, as his star to steer by; and, should he be shipwrecked on any of those fatal rocks, which are but just concealed under an inviting surface—to that parent, who ought to have been his faithful and judicious pilot, may he ascribe all his disasters.

Thus far we have considered the great outlines of parental duty; but before we close this interesting scene, suffer me, for a few moments, while I direct your attention to that period, when your childrens riper years, and your own declining age, give you a right to expect some return for

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all your labours, your cares, your parental anxieties.

I will suppose, (and I hope it is the probable supposition to make of those whom I am now addressing), that those amongst you on whom Heaven has bestowed its choicest blessing on your conjugal relation, have fulfilled the duties it requires, as God and nature have commanded you. Yet, notwithstanding, it sometimes happens in the unsearchable dispensations of Providence, that the child, who bloomed in its infancy, and sweetly smiled in its mother's arms, shall, as it grows up, turn upon the parent who fostered it; and, like the deadly viper, sting the very breast which gave it suck. This will sometimes be the melancholy event notwithstanding every tender and judicious care; where there has been "line upon line, and
" precept

“precept upon precept,” faithfully applied; and these supported by the purest examples.

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Of all those severe afflictions, which heaven sends upon its children to prove their constancy, and bring the soul pure and unfullied through this probationary state,—this is the hardest to be sustained. The poor wretch, who is suspended by one brittle twig, and that breaking, sinks for ever, is happy in comparison of the parent, who lives to behold the disobedience and ingratitude, the wickedness and infamy, of a darling child.

Yet where there has been the pious and attentive care which I have described, though a parent's breast may throb with the most exquisite anguish of sorrow, there is still a something *within* him, which buoys him up against the terrors of *despair*.

Nay,

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Nay, even though so heavy a calamity may bow down the infirmity of aged parents; and may bring their grey hairs so much the sooner, "with sorrow to the grave;" yet they can confidently hail this gloomy mansion, as the place not only where "the weary are at rest;" but to the good and pious, as the certain passage to that happy country, where all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and every sorrow banished from their hearts.

But, alas! far otherwise is it with the negligent and wicked parent: not less sharp are his sorrows; but they are also mingled with the horrors of *remorse*. And I know not how such a parent can be preserved from *despair*, when there is no comfort for him in this world, and, I fear, very little hope in the great and terrible day of the Lord; that day when both the neglected

lected child, and the unnatural parent, shall stand together before the judgment-seat of Christ.

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But, rather let me hold up to your view the picture of a parent's care, rewarded in a wise and virtuous offspring. These will be your pride and glory in the day of your health and strength;—but in the gloomy and melancholy season of sickness and old age, they will be the light of your eyes, and the cordial of your fainting spirits: And as once, with tender care, you watched by the cradle of *their* helpless infancy; so shall they, with pious duty, support your failing strength, soften the pangs of a dying hour, and close your eyes in peace.

But this is not all: the comforts of this delightful connection will not cease with this bounded scene; they will follow you to that world where love and bliss immortal

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mortal reign. The reverend father shall appear, with his pious offspring, before the God of nature, the universal Parent; and shall be able to say, in joyful hope, at the day of general inquisition, ‘Lo! of these, the children thou hast given me, have I lost none *.’

“These are thy glorious gifts Parent of good *!”

One word more and I have done. The greater part of those to whom I am now speaking, have extended their fostering care beyond the limits of their own offspring, and have pitied with a parent’s mind the helpless orphan. How you have behaved in this new relation, I need not tell, let those, who doubt, “Behold and see!”

But for your reward, if there is any

* John, xviii. 9.

† Milton.

truth,

truth (and Revelation does not forbid it) in the delightful hope that they who have already finished their course, and are now receiving their reward, look down with kindness and attention on us who are struggling with sin, sorrow, and infirmity; if this, I say, may be the case, how shall the ardent prayers of the beatified parents ascend to the throne of Heaven, in behalf of *you*, who have sheltered these poor orphans, “scattered in the wide world as “budding branches, rent from the native “tree,” and (but for your munificence) “thrown forth till they are withered *!” —May such prayers be accepted, as a fragrant odour, by the Almighty Parent of the Universe, the Source of Infinite Goodness; and may they descend upon each of you, fraught with a blessing!

And in the awful day, when “the

* Spencer.

“trumpet

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“ trumpet shall sound, and the dead
“ shall be raised,” God of his infinite
mercy grant, that the sentence of final
blessedness may be passed on these little
ones, and on you, their benefactors and
patrons !

S E R M O N VII.

ON THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

St. LUKE, chap. ii. verse 51.

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.

AT this season of the year, when families are assembled together, perhaps there is no subject on which I can more usefully employ your meditations, than on the great relative duty of children towards their parents. In recommending so weighty an obligation to you, I have thought it expedient to engage your attention by the high example of our blessed Lord; who,
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in the days of his incarnation, thought it necessary to be subject to his human parents till the moment of his public ministry for the salvation of lost sinners. He has thereby given an illustrious example of filial duty to all mankind: an example so high as to have all the obligation of a command.

All the relative duties of men are necessary to the dignity and the comfort of of society: they are parts of morality and virtue, because they intend good and happiness by the purest means: they are parts of piety, because they are precepts both of the Law and the Gospel; in both which they are thought to be of such consequence, that these offices are not only in general commanded, but even particular rules are given for the exercise of them.

The duty of children to parents St. Paul calls in a more particular manner
piety;

piety; "let them learn (says he) first to
"shew piety at home, and to requite
"their parents *." And the Apostle has
certainly good reason for impressing this
duty with the mark of peculiar sanctity.
The Almighty hath himself instituted an
analogy between the relationship of chil-
dren towards their parents, and of man-
kind towards himself. Our duty to him,
and our duty to the human authors of our
being, are founded upon reasons very simi-
lar; though in their degree they can never
be brought into any kind of comparison.
God is the first cause; and our parents
are under him the second. God has a
natural authority over us: as being the
original Author of our being; as preserv-
ing our infancy, informing our youth, and
providing for our manhood. Our parents

* 1 Timothy, v. 4.

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also, in whatever does not interfere with our duty to God, have a natural claim of jurisdiction over us; as being, in his hands, the instruments, the laborious, affectionate, anxious instruments of these benefits to us.

When, therefore, we are commanded to address the Deity as "our Father," we must remember, that the Almighty does not degrade himself to the level of a human relationship; but exalts the human relationship to the footsteps of his own throne. He does not diminish his glorious Majesty, but illumines the character he here takes with a ray of his own lustre; he does not weaken the obligation of duty towards himself by condescending to so familiar a character, but renders it only more amiable, ready, and affectionate.

And not only is filial duty an obligation taught us by religion, by social policy,
and

and the more enlightened views of civilized life; but it is also a tie of nature. It pervades the animal creation by instinct. It is acknowledged, and is revered by the fierce Barbarian; it is asserted and is practised by the savage cannibal. And if there is a country where no belief in a deity can be traced, even there filial duty will be found sacred and inviolable.

From these general observations I shall now descend to particular instances of duty, which as good Christians, as good citizens, and as good men, we must all feel ourselves called upon to discharge.

An elegant writer on this subject makes this pathetic appeal. "Recollect, O
" young man, what thy parents have
" done for thee. Remember *all*,—*all*,
" indeed, thou canst not: alas! ill had
" been thy lot, had not their care of thee
" began before thou couldst remember

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“ or know any thing. Now so proud,
 “ self-willed, inexorable, thou couldst
 “ then only ask by thy cries, and move
 “ them with thy tears; and they were
 “ moved. Their hearts were touched
 “ with thy distress; they relieved and
 “ watched thy wants, before thou knewest
 “ thine own necessities, or their kindness.
 “ They clothed thee; thou knewest not
 “ that thou wast naked. Thou askedst not
 “ for bread; but they fed thee *.” The
 first duties, then, we owe to them are *love*
 and *gratitude*. If we are ourselves parents
 we may hence learn our duty as children.
 When the infant hangs at its mother’s
 breast, how does her softened heart expand
 with all the nameless feelings of maternal
 love! When it seems to smile in her face,
 what are the raptures of her fond caresses!

* Ogden on the Ten Commandments, Serm. xi.

Day by day with what delight does she trace each dawning beauty! with what amiable partiality does she discover its perfections! with what fondness does she dwell upon its lisping accents! but if its little frame is disordered, what are the throbbings of a mother's fears.

In stating this demand upon our gratitude, we are to observe one circumstance which considerably enhances it. The kindness shewn to us in the first period of our lives has not been the reward of any merit we possess; nor has been solicited by any appearances of good and amiable dispositions: it has been shewn towards us before there could be the least dawning of one or the other: it has been the result of the most disinterested natural affection; and therefore the more powerfully demands a return of affection.

I have just observed, that we understand

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this clearly by analogy, when we fondle our own offspring in our arms. But without going up so high as the period when we have no memory to assist us, we can all remember in our childhood innumerable instances of their fond care and affection, which have been often tried, but never for a moment overcome, by the most provoking, capricious, and perverse humours. We can all remember, long before we could have done any thing to deserve it, what an expence of care, and time, and money there has been in our education. We all know what an anxiety and intenseness of thought there has been; what laboured plans adopted; what various interests courted and pursued; and all, to place us in stations of life useful, honourable, and lucrative; while we, perhaps, had not even the merit of being thankful for the good intended us; or

submissive

submissive to the wise and salutary system proposed for us.

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If such is the care of parents, is it too much to ask of children that *their* affection should be correspondent? that they should anticipate their duty, and obey as it were before they are commanded? Is it too much to ask of them, that their obedience, should not only be a silent full compliance with an authority from which they cannot extricate themselves; but a ready, a cheerful consent, even in the most indifferent things; believing that parents mean every thing for the best, and act from motives of the truest affection? I am sure that there is not a child in this assembly, who does not think that he ought to be dutiful on the simple principle of doing as he would be done by.

Do you, then, who are so happy as to have parents (and how happy that is you

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may tell, by comparing yourselves with poor children who have no parents), go from hence with this lesson, that you can have no pretensions to be the children of God, that you have hearts formed for no generous virtues, unless you honour your father and your mother, who have a claim to it both by right and gratitude. It is your duty (more especially while you are young) to comply with their inclinations, which are almost always in your favour, though you may not be able to understand them; and to yield to their judgment, which by age, knowledge, and experience must be better than yours. To shew ill humours to those who are your superiors and benefactors, to thwart their plans by obstinacy, and to provoke their passions by opposition; these are not mistakes, but criminal perverseness of disposition; they are not errors, but crimes, of youth, which

which you will shed tears for in your old age. All parents indeed are not equally pleasant in their manners towards their children; and it is possible that the degree of affection may also vary: still, however, it is your duty to treat them with respect, to bear piously with all their infirmities; and if they have defects, or even faults, to conceal them more diligently than you would do your own.

I have hitherto considered filial duty principally as it belongs to our infant years. I shall proceed in another discourse to consider it, as it relates to more advanced life, when we are no longer attached by necessity; but by piety, by honour, affection, and gratitude.

Before I conclude, however, I think it my duty to inform those children, who are the objects of this charitable institution, that,

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that, though orphans, they are not uninterested in the subject which I have been discussing.

It is true (and you are almost all old enough to have a tear for your misfortune), that the mother at whose breast you have been nursed—*she* has been untimely snatched away from you by the stroke of death; and in her last moments, when the heart was struggling against the pang which was to sever the soul from the body, still she hung upon her dear little ones, whom she left unguarded to buffet with the storms of the world.

Deprived of the careful sollicitude of a mother, and then most in want of a father's protection, *that* also you have lost. He too hath laid his aching heart in the cold grave, and his trembling tongue faintly lisped out a prayer for his poor, forsaken orphans.

But

But although you have been left on the wide world orphans and fatherless, yet God hath not deserted you. Behold he hath raised you up many parents. To these you owe a present comfortable subsistence; to these, the means of instruction; and (which is of the highest importance) to these you are indebted for the salvation of your immortal souls.

To them therefore you are to transfer all that general reverence and gratitude (the particular instances of which cannot indeed be here applied) which, under other circumstances, would have been due to your natural parents. The same blessings attend upon your duty to your superiors and benefactors here, as would have belonged to you, had an opportunity been afforded you of testifying it to your natural parents. Your education here, and all
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the means of honest and comfortable maintenance hereafter, depend upon your obedience to that care which has been provided for you in this house of refuge. By obedience you will become virtuous and happy, the favourites of God, and respected by those with whom you are connected: by disobedience you will become wicked and miserable, the outcasts of Heaven, and the scorn and detestation of the world.

Be not then your own enemies; and God will be your friend, and he will make others your friends. Expose not yourselves to temptations; and the grace of God will support you harmless against those, which others may offer to you. Be good and religious; and God will take care that you shall be happy. Forget not him; and never will he forget to bless you.

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May he indeed bleſs you! may he make
you good, uſeful, happy in this world;
and may he hereafter receive you as his
children in Heaven!

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S E R M O N V I I I .

ON THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

ECCLES. chap. iii. verse 12, 13.

*My son, help thy father in his age, and
grieve him not as long as he liveth.*

*And if his understanding fail, have patience
with him, and despise him not when thou
art in thy full strength.*

A FORMER discourse on filial duty was principally directed to very young persons, who were still under their parents roof, dependent on their care, protection, and munificence. I now propose to carry my reflections a little farther, to the time
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when children are independent of them as to circumstances; when they are bound only by piety, by gratitude, by past endearing, affectionate recollections.

The volume of duties in this state of the relationship is certainly not diminished, but rather increased, by the ability to make some return for those obligations, which have been the foundation of our present happiness and prosperity. Obedience is still a filial duty, though qualified, and extremely different, from what it has hitherto been. The voice of a father has a claim of reverence to the latest hour of his life: but if our own solid and impartial judgments, and our unavoidable distinct interests should at any time forbid us to obey, our refusal must be accompanied with such respect, as will prevent it from giving a rational umbrage to a parent's feelings.

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The filial duties, however, of our riper years are generally of a different nature; they are duties rather of *affection* than *obedience*; and bear some relation to the kindness which, at a former period, we have ourselves received. The constitution, and the spirits of advanced age must always be in a degree impaired; and it looks for support in the attentions and endeavours of others, rather than in its own energies. If a parent, then, is incumbered with the world, it will now become the province of a child to assist him in his worldly concerns. If he is languid, it is the cheerful company of a child which is to revive his spirits; it is filial attention which is to provide and encrease his enjoyments. Our own youthful spirits may lead us, perhaps, to a preference of gayer amusements; but it will be our duty, and ought to be our pleasure,

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to

to sacrifice the bent of our animal spirits, to the best and most dignifying feelings of our nature. The manners of old people are generally unfashionable; and their tempers often become austere, and even offensive, from the loss of powers, which are gone for ever—through the infirmities and chronic pains of declining years—and the wear and tear of the mind in a bustling life. Yet old age ought to be indulged; we all feel that it ought, because we ourselves expect and desire to arrive in our turn at the same period of life, when we shall think it by no means just to be neglected. And from whom shall the aged parent receive that indulgence, which shall support his reverend head, and gild the evening of his days, but from the piety of children, whose feeble infancy he has nursed, and led them step by step to manhood?

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It is the duty, then, of children at this time to “double all their tender assiduity, “to watch and prevent their desires, to “catch every precious opportunity to be “grateful, with an eager sweet attention; “of which they will give a thousand little “inestimable proofs, which words cannot “teach, and not to know is criminal; “which require no capacity, but that of “*feeling*, and are to be understood in the “*heart* *.”

There is another duty, which it is possible children, who are settled in the world, may be called upon to perform; and which not to perform is so unnatural, that I feel an apology almost necessary for reminding you of it: and that is the *maintenance of parents*, if in the sad vicissitude of fortune they sink to poverty. If my father is old, and decrepid and poor, yet if I am

* Ogden on the Ten Commandments, Sermon X.

poor, I am also young, and can labour for his support. But in this age, when the arts of getting forward in the world are so well understood, it often happens that while the parent is a needy old man, the son is prosperous and making some figure in life. It is an insult to our nature to suppose it possible that in this case, a son can withhold a liberal assistance from the human author of his being. I can imagine (because it has been seen), a man fattening on the famine of his fellow-creatures, who are unconnected with him but by general ties; but I cannot imagine, that even this man can deny support to his own father. Were such a one to build an hospital, I should expect the lightning of Heaven to consume it; and I am sure it would not quench one spark of that flame, which will hereafter burn in his tortured conscience.

The

The maintenance of parents, however, is a duty to which few of you are likely to be called; and if you were, which probably none of you would be reluctant to perform. But there are other marks of your affection which they will look for from you, “ which wealth cannot procure; and “ which, if it could, lose all their value, “ when they are purchased. They will “ look for tokens of *your* kindness, which “ cannot be received from other hands. “ Their child is still the comfort and “ delight of their dying eyes. You will “ be ready to answer such demands: your “ heart will correspond with these calls of “ nature: you will be cheerful and ready “ in the performance of the humblest and “ most irksome offices *.”

I have all along necessarily spoken in

* Ogden, Sermon X.

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the person of one sex; but the most ignorant of my audience will naturally apply what has been said equally to both: nay, in many cases, the duty falls with peculiar obligation on the softer sex. I should without hesitation pronounce *a man* to be worthless, who is a stern or careless son. But *a woman*, who does not dedicate herself with an eager nursing affection to the infirmities of a mother, can never be herself either a good mother or a good wife; and will be universally thought of with indelible disgust.

There are other situations, besides those of poverty, infirmity, or old age, where parents ought to derive consolation from the attentions of a child of riper years; *e. g.* in the hour of sorrow and affliction. Perhaps they have already lost one beloved child. It will become the duty then of the survivors to fill up the
painful

painful void by redoubled assiduities; and to intercept the pangs of recollection, by giving no opportunity of missing any endearing duty, which was wont to be performed by another. Perhaps the stroke of death has severed the dearest connection on earth, and separated the faithful pair, whose fates, through many years, had been united; whose views, whose interests, whose happiness was the same—each the sharer of the other's breast. It is the child, the pledge of once happy affection, the mutual darling, who is to fill the widowed heart, and to call off the agonizing thought from the relentless grave; who is to excite still one warm wish for life, to give one relish to the dregs of existence. It is the child, who is to burst the prison of his parent's sorrows; who is to glance comfort and joy upon the darkness of his soul; who is to

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be the faithful friend, the affectionate partner he hath lost. Pious duty! and if, in the corruptions of the world, a link still remains, which unites the soul of man in this present state to the pure angels and blessed spirits in heaven, this is the link of the chain, which the breath of hell hath not yet dissolved.

These are some of the great outlines of filial duty. And if there is an argument more powerful than another to enforce the practice of them, may God suggest it to my heart!

How read ye in the Scriptures? "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it*." Again; "He that forsaketh his father, is as a

* Proverbs, xxx. 17.

"blasphemer,

“blasphemer; and he that angreth his
“mother, is cursed of God *.” We
read that our blessed Lord in his human
nature, “went down with his parents,
“and was subject unto them †.” He,
then, whose example was so pointed, will
surely, as the judge of heaven and earth,
require an account of your obedience to it
at the last day.

Let me appeal to your humanity. Of
all the sorrows, whether singly or in one
calamitous combination, which can oppress
the human heart, a parent’s sorrows are
the most exquisitely grievous. Disappointed
in their dearest and most reasonable hopes,
the whole world is a cheerless, dreary
waste, affording not a solitary comfort to
mingle with the throbbings of a tortured
breast. Peace, spirits, health, are strangers
to the injured, but still fond, parents:

Ecclus. iii. 16.

† Luke, ii. 51.

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and it may be, and I fear has been, that }
when the tide of parental affliction has
swelled to its utmost magnitude, the big
sorrow bursts the overcharged heart.
Whoever thou art, O undutiful and diso-
bedient child, beware lest, at the gloomy
midnight hour, the sad spectre draws aside
thy curtain, and awakens thee with the
horrible accusation of being a parent's
murderer!

Some of you, perhaps, may imagine,
that in this bold picture of filial disobe-
dience I have indulged myself in an unwar-
rantable latitude of pathetic fiction. But
whoever thou art, who thinkest lightly of
an undutiful child, thou knowest not yet
a parent's feelings. When thou beholdest
thine own offspring smiling upon you,
you will then bear testimony to the extent
of that duty, which I have been this day
recommending. And when thou hast fol-
lowed

lowed the authors of thy being to the grave; and the time comes that thou lookest for comfort from thine own children, thou wilt *then* learn, in thine own parental feelings, what was the expectation, the sorrow, the disappointment of those, who are now no more, when, alas! the time of thy filial duty is past for ever. “ You will recollect a thousand
“ endearments, which before glided off
“ your mind without impression; a thousand
“ favours unrepaid; a thousand duties
“ unperformed; and wish, vainly wish for
“ their return, that you may recompence
“ that kindness, which before you never
“ understood. Your crime will now seem
“ irretrievable; it is indelibly recorded,
“ and the stamp of fate is fixed upon it *.”

May your filial piety prevent you this bitter hour! May every child in this as-

* Rambler.

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VIII.**

fembly be the child of virtue, the child of God! and may every parent be blest with such an offspring! May he have reason to rejoice in the olive branches round about his table; and at the last, when he has run his appointed course, may he descend into the grave full of years, full of honours, full of comforts!

S E R M O N IX.

ON THE RELATIVE DUTIES OF MINISTER AND PEOPLE.

I CORINTHIANS, chap. iv. verse 1, 2.

*Let a man account so of us, as of the ministers
of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of
God.*

*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a
man be found faithful.*

OUR blessed Lord's design in the promulgation of the gospel, was to form an universal church from all the nations of the world, which was to be continued on earth, from age to age, till, at the

Preached
at Thrap-
ston,
North-
ampton-
shire,
Nov. 29,
1789.

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the consummation of all things, it should be completed in one pure, spiritual, and eternal society in *heaven*. For this purpose he himself appointed the twelve apostles, the seventy disciples, and the prophets of the New Testament; whose ministry was to be supplied by a constant succession of pastors and teachers, set apart and qualified to be "ministers of Christ, " and stewards of the mysteries of God." Their office is undoubtedly of infinite importance, as to them is committed the interpretation of the divine will; to them it belongs to repeat and enforce the doctrines of the gospel; and to encourage the people in their holy profession, and in the practice of the Christian virtues. As by *their* zeal and fidelity Christianity was first established; so by the same qualifications of a standing ministry must Christian knowledge be preserved, and by their instruction

instruction must Christian men be edified. If the trust confided to the ministry is so important, their most essential qualification will be that which the apostle here mentions, *viz.* "that they be found faithful."

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The fidelity of ministers is of two kinds; one belonging to their general character, as members of a sacred order, to whose example the world naturally looks up; and the other belonging to their respective offices.

In the FIRST place I shall consider the general character of a faithful "steward of the mysteries of God." It is required of him, that his life should be the practical comment on those sublime truths, and that pure morality, which he inculcates from the pulpit: his private character, as well as his public ministry, should be

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be eminently pious and devout; by which I do not mean that his deportment should be austere; on the contrary, as religion gives the truest cheerfulness—the cheerfulness of the heart and conscience, so the manners which it should inspire are amiable, cheerful, and engaging. His conversation and social intercourses should be rigidly moral; and his virtue, justice, and integrity acknowledged in all his concerns. His disposition should be fraught with charity, in the most extensive meaning of that lovely virtue. It is, indeed, a sad truth, that the very confined incomes of many of our clergy (and those too, perhaps, the most useful and respectable amongst us), do not allow them to exercise their charitable dispositions in large pecuniary assistance: but charity is an extensive virtue, and has various methods of discovering

discovering itself. There is charity in judging; charity in consolation; charity in friendly and seasonable advice; charity in a thousand nameless affectionate offices, which every day present themselves in the social intercourse, and which require no other means, no other qualifications, than a truly Christian temper. St. Paul admirably sums up the general character of a worthy steward of God in his exhortation to Timothy, that he be “an example of
“the believers, in word, in conversation,
“in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*.”

The SECOND kind of fidelity required in stewards, pertains to their conduct in their respective offices in the ministry. The present occasion requires our consideration of only one of those offices, *viz.* that which belongs to the parochial mi-

* 1 Timothy, iv. 12.

M

nister.

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nister. His first duty is to be exercised in this place, where it is incumbent upon him to take care that the whole of the public worship is performed with becoming decency, decorum, and solemnity: for it is the collected adoration, supplication, and piety of a whole congregation assembled for that purpose, in the presence of their great Creator and Benefactor, in the sacred edifice, especially dedicated to his service. As a preacher, he is to consider that he is giving the most important instruction under the most solemn circumstances; he is a servant under the immediate eye of his Almighty Master. He must consider that the nature of his instructions is to spread and confirm the true knowledge of God, and to enforce obedience to his holy will; it is an instruction designed to make men better and happier

pier here, and to conduct their souls to the felicities of Heaven hereafter.

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For our conduct in this respect, we cannot do better than consult St. Paul's charge to Titus; "In doctrine shewing
" uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound
" speech that cannot be condemned *;"
not putting forth our own unfounded opinions, the effects of our prejudices, passions, or errors, as the oracles of God; but bringing every thing we venture to propose to you to the infallible standard of the Gospel. In the subject of our discourses we must never indulge the emotions of malice, ill humour, or resentment; yet, on the other hand, we must not, from false delicacy or interested motives, be sparing of sober admonition and reproof, as there may be occasion. We are to win

* Titus, ii. 7, 8.

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and to urge sinners to obedience, by faithfully placing before them the nature of the divine promises and threatenings. We are not "to smoothe our tongues" (as the prophet speaks) at the expence of truth: we must not palliate or pass over vices which are fashionable and predominant; nor must we, at our peril, in any wise "handle the word of God deceitfully *." Hear the weighty charge, and most awful responsibility, which the Almighty himself has given to his ministers: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his

* 2 Corinth. iv. 2.

" wicked

“ wicked way, to save his life ; the same
“ wicked man shall die in his iniquity ;
“ but his blood will I require at thine
“ hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked,
“ and he then turn not from his wicked-
“ ness, nor from his wicked way, *he* shall
“ die in his iniquity ; but *thou* hast deli-
“ vered thy soul *.”

Another very important part of public worship, is the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. This is a holy rite, so peculiarly sacred, of such immense spiritual benefit and comfort to pious communicants, that I should think myself highly culpable were I to withhold it from my flock ; and therefore it is my intention that, in future, it shall be administered in this church much more frequently than it has hitherto been, and as

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18, 19.

often as you will give me encouragement to celebrate it.

These are the public duties of a parochial minister, to which he will think it necessary to add others, which are likewise of great consequence. Such is the duty of catechizing, which is necessary to instruct children in the principles and duties of the religion they profess. Without such a knowledge of principles, our preaching, and their hearing, will have but little effect. Under a full impression of the necessity of this part of our duty, it is my wish that children should be publicly catechized during the time of divine service once in every month.

Another duty of the parochial minister is visiting the sick; a duty which I hope none of us are so negligent as to omit, whenever our parishioners will give us the opportunity of performing it. If they are
indifferent

indifferent in requiring this office at our hands, it will become our duty to shew them of what great concern it is to them.

I shall mention but one more pastoral duty, and that is, that as the minister exhorts men generally to avoid all profaneness and immorality, so it belongs to him to discourage and check every instance of it in his parish to the utmost of his power. The progress of irreligion and immorality has of late years been truly alarming. The example has been, and, I am sorry to add, is set by the higher classes of people, to their great shame, and to the great injury of the state of which they are citizens. The contagion has spread, as might naturally be expected, through the very lowest classes amongst us, to the neglect of honest industry, to the ruin of their families, and to the dissolution of all decency and subordination. The instances of this nature have



been so glaring, as to engage the serious attention of our most amiable sovereign; who about four years ago, issued a very wise and salutary proclamation against vice, profaneness, and immorality. It is the duty of every good citizen and subject to assist in carrying the royal pleasure into execution: and it is more particularly made a part of the pastoral duty, as we are enjoined to read it at least four times a year in our churches. And this injunction will, in future, be complied with in this parish.

Thus far I have stated to you the duties of the "stewards of the mysteries of God." It becomes me to add, that there are some duties also required of the family over which they are appointed. And here, as I feel the weight of the awful charge which I have accepted, I cannot but lament that it is not in my power to execute in person, so constantly as I could wish, the duties of my

my office. It is no small happiness to me, however, that your own choice has pointed out, and recommended to me, how those duties may be executed as conscientiously, as I hope they would have been by myself. Personal compliments ill become the dignity of this consecrated spot; nevertheless I must be allowed to say, that respect and attention is due to that pastor, who ministers to you under the influence of no private friendship or powerful interference; but solely on the ground of his own acknowledged qualifications.

I mean not to plead for respect to our order; I ask only for that attention, which is absolutely necessary to enable us to do our full duty towards you. The service we are engaged in is certainly an honourable one, and entitles us to some regard for the sake of him, whose commission we bear, "We are" (in the words of the Apostle)

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Apostle) "ambassadors for Christ, as though
" God did beseech you by us: we pray
" you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled
" to God*."

The duty of hearers is, in the first place, to reverence the Sabbath, by attending constantly the stated opportunities of public worship and instruction. How necessary this is to the glory of God, and the salvation of your own souls, you cannot but be sensible, as you call yourselves *Christians*: and, as members of the community, you cannot but acknowledge the good effects of example on every order of men. It is from the violation of the Sabbath, that men's hearts are hardened to commit those crimes and depredations of which we all complain, and which therefore fill our jails with crowds of unhappy wretches. And

* 2 Corinth. v. 20.

if we attend these miserable creatures at the the fatal tree, in the hour of their agonizing penitence, we shall find that they all ascribe their villanies and punishment to the mis-spending this sacred day.

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And when you are assembled in this place, let me exhort you to attend with minds free and disengaged; with composed thoughts, and a religious disposition, under a sense of the great purpose for which you are assembled under the eye of God.

The time will not allow me to consider the duties incumbent upon you, as parishioners, so fully as I could wish. I must therefore content myself with tracing the mere outlines of what, I am sure, you will think necessary to do in support of your minister's good intention.

As it is my wish, that the public worship should be performed throughout with dignity and decorum; so, I trust, you will
take

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take care that the place of this worship should be neat and decent. While you labour to make your own habitations convenient and comfortable, you will not shew such disrespect and indifference to the Almighty, whose house this is peculiarly called, as to suffer it to remain ruinous and slovenly.

As I shall encrease the opportunities of your assembling at the Altar of Christ, I trust that you will gladly embrace these opportunities of commemorating a dying Saviour, and feeling to yourselves the benefits of his precious blood.

With respect to all profaneness and immorality, I hope there is no occasion to exhort you to check every instance of it in yourselves, and to discourage it in all about you. The best means of doing this, is by bringing up all, whom you have an influence over, in the strict habits of religion

gion and virtue. I shall therefore take the liberty of recommending two things to you, which I have very nearly at heart. The first is, that you instruct your children and servants in the catechism, and that you bring them to church to receive *themselves* the advantage of public catechising, and to shew a useful example to others. The other thing, which I beg most earnestly to recommend to you, is the establishment of a *Sunday school*. The education of these seminaries is well adapted to the humble situations which the scholars are probably destined to; they who are now vagabonds, and engaged in the sad paths of infant vice, are trained up in the habits of religion and decency; and, instead of turning out idle, disorderly, and, nufances to society, will probably grow up in the observance of the Lord's day, and become honest, industrious,

ous, happy, and useful in their several stations *.

Finally, brethren, let me exhort you to brotherly love, more particularly in the

* In consequence of my recommendation, two Sunday schools have been established in the parish, which are now amongst the most flourishing and best regulated in the county; and, highly to the credit of the inhabitants, are supported by very liberal subscriptions. The parishioners are encouraged to this subscription (and, I trust, the same encouragement will more and more encrease), by finding the face of the Sabbath day entirely altered amongst them. Before the institution of these schools, the poorer children spent their Sabbath in the streets, or wandering about the fields, idle, ragged, and disorderly. No such thing is any longer observed: they regularly attend the church twice a day; their parents exert themselves to send them clean and neat; their progress in the catechism, which before they had not the least knowledge of, is astonishing; they are more respectful to their superiors; and are more orderly and decent throughout the week.

profession

profession of our religion. I apprehend, that in this, as well as most other parishes, your sentiments are not unanimously the same with respect to forms, at least of religion. But let us all, of all persuasions, remember, that we have but one Saviour, and one hope: let us therefore make religion the band of harmony, but never the occasion of disunion. I pray God that you may all “ dwell together in unity, as
“ becomes the servants of so mild and
“ benevolent a Master; paying all due af-
“ fection and respect to each other; treat-
“ ing the aged amongst you with reve-
“ rence; the young with gentleness; the
“ weak with compassion; and the intem-
“ perate of our own, or other persuasions,
“ with candour and pity. That when, by
“ the appointment of Almighty God, we
“ shall be summoned out of this world into
“ a better, we may go down to the grave
“ in

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“in peace and brotherly love, and wake
 “to the fruition of endless joy and hap-
 “piness.”

—“A new commandment (saith our
 “blessed Lord) I give unto you, That ye
 “love one another; as I have loved you,
 “that ye also love one another. By this
 “shall all men know that ye are my dis-
 “ciples, if ye have love one to another *.”

My brethren, in the situation I am
 about to stand in towards you as minister
 of this parish, I have thought it necessary,
 on the first occasion I have of meeting
 you, to state what you on one hand have a
 right to expect from me in the function of
 my ministry; and what, I hope, as pa-
 rishioners, you will not deny to me on the
 other, in support of my pastoral exertions.
 The situation of a pastor to his flock is a

* John, xiii. 34, 35.

most solemn and weighty charge; and if the minister is sincere, and the hearers attend with pious dispositions, I will add, that there is no situation in which one man can stand towards society, which is more endearing and affectionate. It is here that the mind is taught to lay aside its turbulent and uneasy passions; it is here that the bold and noble principles of justice, integrity, and truth are enforced; it is here that the finest and purest feelings of the heart,—love, benevolence, goodwill are called forth, improved, and directed to an amiable and profitable practice; it is here that the only remedy, the only alleviation of every sorrow is effectually proposed; and it is here, that when disgusted with the world and worldly concerns, we are ready to say “I loath it; I “would not live always*,” when the

* Job, vii. 16.

decaying body is ready to return to its earth, it is here that another existence—the realms of eternal felicity are unfolded to the weary soul: in short, it is here that we are made acquainted with and prepared for IMMORTALITY. What shall hereafter be the fate of other connections is uncertain; but this, when the tongue which now speaks to you is to this world for ever silent, and the ears of those who hear me, are closed in the grave, this connection shall not be dissolved with our mortal frame; but, when the last trumpet shall awaken us from the sleep of death, to render an account of our conduct before the judgement-seat of Christ, we shall again meet in a new and awful situation; I to account for my fidelity, and *you* for your improvement.

At that day, as thou, O Almighty God! wilt judge thy stewards, not according

according to the extent of their abilities, but by the faithful application of such as they have (however mean) to thy glory and service; O may I hear those blessed sounds, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" and may this, thy family, receive the happy sentence, "Come ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Grant this O merciful God! for Jesus Christ's sake.

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S E R M O N X.

ANNIVERSARY SERMON AT THE ASYLUM.

St. JOHN, chap. xxi. latter part of the 15th verse.

Feed my lambs.

THESE words are part of the charge delivered by our Lord after his resurrection to Peter, and are the more important, as they contain his last instructions for the care of his church, and are repeated with unusual earnestness. Our Lord's command was principally of a spiritual nature; but as it related to an infant church, at present imperfectly established, and subject to the most furious storms of persecution,

Preached
at the
Asylum,
on the
Anniver-
sary,
May 19,
1790.

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his benevolent intention was probably not confined to one branch of duty, but embraced all the wants and necessities of its members. When a Christian suffers, all Christian men are called upon for his relief. But when poverty, neglect, or desertion almost impel the infant members of our church to courses of life unworthy of that religion into which they were baptized; when no teacher is at hand to enlighten their dark ignorance, with the knowledge of God, and his laws; with the knowledge of a Saviour, and the conditions of their salvation; then the command is indispensable upon us to exhort, and upon you to be ready, to feed these lambs with natural food, that they may be prepared to receive the bread of eternal life.

The duty of charity is frequently inculcated, and well understood; I shall there-

fore,

fore, at present, rather give the heads of some motives to this duty, than enlarge and insist upon them.

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I. It is the command of God, laid down in every page of his word, and urged under every form of his religion. It is to be found in the motives which brought down our blessed Redeemer from the glories of his Father in Heaven, to become man on earth. Throughout his life it was his most bright and distinguishing quality; shedding blessings upon all who came within its reach; more invaluable than the light and heat which fall from the glorious sun in the firmament: it was the divine precept which flowed from his lips, and is made the leading condition of our justification before the throne of his judgement at the last day.

II. It is the temper of heaven, of which we all hope to become members,

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when the church is dissolved on earth. To use the words of an elegant writer, in that " place where vanity and competition are forgotten for ever, we shall find " a cup of cold water given for the relief " of a poor brother ; a prayer uttered for " the mercy of God to those whom we " want power to relieve ; a word of instruction to ignorance ; a smile of comfort to " misery, of more avail than all those " accomplishments which confer honour " and distinction amongst the sons of " folly *"

III. It is laying up treasures, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, above the vicissitudes of fortune, and beyond even the desolating grasp of death ; secure against the hour when we shall launch into that state, where nothing will remain

* Johnson's Sermon on the death of his wife.

with

with us but what we have given away.
“ In that day (saith the same pious author,
“ who hath before this experienced the
“ truth of his doctrine) when the shadow
“ of death shall compass him about, and
“ all the vanities of the world shall fade
“ away; when all the comforts of this
“ life shall forsake him, when pleasure
“ shall no longer delight, nor power pro-
“ tect him: in that dreadful hour, shall
“ the man, whose care has been extended
“ to the general happiness of mankind;
“ whose charity has rescued sickness from
“ the grave, and poverty from the dun-
“ geon; who has heard the groans of the
“ aged struggling with misfortunes; and
“ the cries of infants languishing with
“ hunger, find favour in the sight of the
“ great Author of society, and his re-com-
“ pence shall flow upon him from the
“ fountain of mercy: he shall stand with-
“ out

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“out fear on the brink of life; and pass
“into eternity, with an humble confidence
“of finding that mercy, which he has
“never denied *.”

IV. Charity is a social and political virtue: it promotes honesty and integrity, by weakening the strong temptations of poverty, nakedness, hunger, and neglect. “Feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain †.” It is too sad a truth, that men, who have enough, find temptation to break through the strictness of virtue and honour to get more: surely, then, the temptation must be incomparably stronger to those, who literally have nothing; who starve for want of daily bread; and see all that is dear and valuable to them perishing for

* Taylor’s Sermons, vol. i. p. 83.

† Proverbs, xxx. 8, 9.

want of nature's common sustenance. Let us then endeavour to remedy the evil of depredation, by diminishing the severity of distress; and let us guard our property by shewing that we are worthy to enjoy it.

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These general motives to charity it is my cheerful duty to apply more particularly to the purpose of this benevolent institution, on whose annual commemoration we are now assembled. And if ever a man spake in the earnestness and sincerity of his heart, in a zeal founded upon knowledge, experience and conviction,—with that zeal and that sincerity do I now speak before you in the house of God, in his presence, who minutely examines motives and actions.

But while I plead for these poor orphans, who, under God, depend upon their more opulent fellow-creatures for their daily

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daily bread, let it not be understood that I sum up all charitable good into one instance, and that I allow but little comparative merit to other institutions of beneficent intention. When I consider a national provision for the poor, however it may have its imperfections; when I view the large provision made for nurturing the infant mind; when, in one place, I behold the neat and hospitable pile which throws open its gates, like the pool of Bethesda, for the sick, the maimed, and the woman in the painful hour of her travail; when I see one charity rescuing the vagrant poor from the, otherwise inevitable, destruction of hereditary vice; and another inviting, like the Saviour of mankind, the weary and heavy laden; assisting repentance by protection, consolation, and maintenance; and holding out the blessed anticipation of the mercy of Heaven; in
this

this bright scene of glory to God, and good-will towards men, I forget the depravity of our nature, I almost forget that man is fallen; and consider these works of love as the blooming fruit of Paradise, which adorned the state of man's innocence; which angels delighted to gaze upon, and even the Almighty contemplated as his favourite creation.

“Many daughters,” said King Lemuel, “have done virtuously;” but I will not add, in favour of the Asylum, “Thou excellest them all*.” I contend only for equal merit in our design, both on the ground of advantage to the community, and humane relief to a species of distress which is the most helpless and complicated.

We consider it as a social good; because

* Proverbs, xxxi. 29.

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we bestow education and instruction to make those useful members of the state, who would otherwise be impediments to it. They who have no guides of their early years, can hardly be said to know the difference between good and evil. Having no principles of religion and virtue instilled into them, they will naturally follow the vicious example of those about them. If they are hungry, they will use the most compendious method of satisfying the cravings of nature, by taking from another. If their passions solicit them, what kind monitor is to restrain them from the most abandoned, vicious, brutal, and excessive gratification of them? And even admitting that the natural power of conscience is not annihilated by early opposite habits; yet, without a knowledge of the world, without the knowledge of any useful occupation, without a friend, how are these wandering

dering lambs to employ the natural notices of right and wrong, to the purposes of honourable and industrious life? The same argument, which binds a parent to educate his children, proves the necessity and utility of educating the poor: 1st, To teach them sound principles, that they may become good and virtuous, above the allurements of vice, above all temptations to dishonour themselves, their nature, and their God: and, 2dly, that they may be qualified in the means of procuring their own maintenance and comfort; and for the reciprocal good and happiness of the community they live in.

Again; we answer a valuable purpose to the state in the prevention of crimes. It is an important question in the constitution and progress of society, How are crimes to be extirpated? The legislature hath hitherto fallen upon no other method than
by

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by punishment: but this is inadequate to the design; because the most severe execution of justice does not appear to diminish the number of offenders. The reason is this, because punishment carries with it no conviction; in itself it proves no more than this, that he who punishes, has more power than he who steals. And therefore punishment, where the conscience and understanding have no other means of being awakened to a sense of guilt, will operate with but very few to deter, and with most men, only to make them more secret and artful.

Upon principles both of humanity and religion, it is more desirable to prevent, than to punish crimes; and if punishment is found to be comparatively ineffectual, it will be more desirable upon principles of policy also. What then are the preventive means which we propose? the

nurture

nurture of the youthful mind in good principles; and furnishing it with the means of subsistence by the useful arts. Experience proves the efficacy of this plan: for go to the prisons, and examine the description of felons, and you will find them to be in general involved in a state almost of brutal ignorance; while the number of those, who have had superior advantages of education, bears no kind of proportion. The former become objects of punishment, in the darkness of ignorance, almost without knowing that they have committed a crime; and by an inevitable path must have perished by disease, by hunger, or the hand of justice.

And if in the course of human events there is to any human being a lot of inevitable destruction unavoidable, it must have been to the objects now before you, without the benefit of this institution.

O

They

They are deserted children, having no natural claim on earth, not even a parochial protection, poor as it is: they are aliens, taken up perhaps by a stranger, who is at full liberty to abandon them again to the wide world. When they are received into this house of refuge, they are as ignorant and untaught in every thing good and useful, as at the hour of their birth. If thus friendless, and thus ignorant, they are left to wander about the streets of a vast city, what must be the almost unavoidable consequence? On one hand, recollect their youth, helpless and unsuspecting; their sex delicate and tender; perhaps too with personal beauty, the indiscriminate gift of heaven, from the palace to the cottage. On the other hand, recollect the almost countless numbers who are vigilant, artful depredators on the charms of unguarded innocence; some to satisfy their own rapacious

cious

cious desires, and others as the base panders of wealthy profligates. To their own sex; this must be an argument of irresistible force. They know that even good principles, good education, parental protection, and the pride of character, are not always sufficient to guard them from the tenderness of their own hearts, and the wiles of the seducer: how much greater then must *their* danger be, who have had no principles or instruction instilled into them; who have no parents to caution or protect them, and who have additionally the compulsion of the most urgent want to receive the wretched bread of infamy.

What are the means by which we prevent this dreadful mischief? We take their infant years under immediate protection, till the mind is sufficiently expanded and informed to guide itself. We teach them to avoid wickedness, not from fear, but

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from principle: we inculcate the *radical* objection to sin, that it is contrary to the will of God: we shew the inconveniences and miseries of it even in this world; and the sad consequences of it in that which is to come: we instruct them in the beauty of piety and virtue, and shew them the advantages of it here; that it is blessed by God, applauded by angels, and approved by men: and we unfold the blisful rewards which are treasured up for it hereafter. We teach them against the hour of temptation to resist it, not on the slavish argument, that they will be turned out of a service, sent to a prison, and severely punished: but we give them principles to enable them to overcome it on a more solid and ingenuous mode of reasoning, “How can I do this great wickedness
“ and sin against God, against my own
“ soul, and against my neighbour?” With
this

this religious and moral nurture of the mind, we moreover instruct them in the means of getting their bread honestly and usefully; for when we tell them not to steal, we teach them also how to work.

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Our next enquiry will naturally be into the success of what, I hope, you will allow to be our laudable endeavours. “ Let us
“ contemplate the beautiful picture that
“ is now before us. Behold benevolence
“ surrounded by her attendant virtues,
“ administering to the necessities, and cultivating the minds of these happy children: temperance presides over their
“ meals; humility clothes; industry instructs; and modesty adorns them: these
“ are the matrons that superintend; these
“ are the guardians that watch over and
“ protect them *.” Behold them assem-

* Dr. Francklin's Anniversary Sermon.

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bled in the house of God:—It has been said, that “such a numerous choir of infants, chaunting the praises of their Almighty Benefactor, affords the most heavenly resemblance upon earth of an hierarchy of angels glorifying God on high*.”

Look forward to their behaviour in service; and how valuable a seminary of that nature this charity is, admits of the most unequivocal proof. I might appeal to very many in this assembly for the proof of my assertion, who are ready to declare, that all which they expected from the objects of so pure an institution, has been completely answered; many, who continue their countenance and benefaction to this charity, from their own experience of its designs being answered in the orphans

* Dr. Markham's Anniversary Sermon.

under their own care: and I ought to add, that there are not a few who have *more than once* repeated the experiment without disappointment*.

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But one proof we have of the success of our endeavours, which is easy to every understanding, and convincing to the most incredulous; a proof which many, whom I am now speaking before, have often witnessed with delighted hearts; I mean the almost monthly sight of young women returning, after a seven years apprenticeship, with satisfactory testimonials of exemplary conduct, to offer up solemn and public thanks, in the face of the congregation, for the mercies they have hitherto received. When at this delightful spectacle it is con-

* Amongst many other instances, a lady of high rank, who has had two orphans apprenticed to her, assured me some time since, that they were by far the best servants she had ever received into her family.



sidered, what they would have been but for this house, and what they now are, judgment applauds what humanity began; and not to assist in carrying to a greater extent so glorious a work, is not only a want of benevolence and religion, but it is a defect in patriotism, and a desertion of the common good.

Upon the whole, what are the advantages which we hold out to the community?

1st. As far as our institution goes, we diminish the number of female profligates, who, in the metropolis and its neighbourhood, bear a proportion to the whole sex, which I dare not mention. When, therefore, we shelter a female orphan, in her most defenceless years, in her greatest distress, and, perhaps, at the decisive moment of her life, we, in all probability, prevent one from adding to the number. The villany of our sex is generally the
cause

cause of profligacy in the other; but the injured female returns the mischief upon society, to the whole extent of her allurements; which are sometimes strong enough to tempt even the husband from his conjugal fidelity; and, in numberless cases, spread vice, disease, and ruin amongst the young and the giddy. We may consider then this house like Noah's ark floating upon the waters, as preserving a few souls safe and unpolluted from the torrent of dissipation and vice, which overflows the world: as a little Zoar *, to which they are led by the Angel of God, that their souls may live. Remember, therefore, that in preserving one woman in the paths of decency, chastity, and virtue, you may save a son, a relation, a friend, or a servant from the fascination and ruin of her vicious blandishments.

* Genesis, xix. 20.

2dly. We

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2dly. We prepare for society a succession of faithful and industrious servants. Trained up in vestal modesty, in habits of regularity, industry, and decency, amidst good examples, and assiduous instruction, they are prepared to become valuable domestics of virtuous families. How much of the peace and comfort of families depend on this necessary part of their establishment, it is unnecessary for me to point out. I will say only in our own favour, that as the objects of this charity are unacquainted with vice, children will not be corrupted by their bad examples: instructed in all the reasons, motives, and principles of virtue, they have no temptation to pilfer property; and bred up in humility, they are unlikely to be turbulent and insolent. This is their general character, with exceptions wonderfully few, considering the depravity of human nature, which we know

know will sometimes baffle every effort of care, education, and discipline. And I must take leave to add, that were the humanity and the wisdom of heads of families uniformly exercised in a judicious, tender continuation of the designs and treatment of this house, these exceptions, few as they are, would be greatly diminished.

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3dly. Admitting that we save these poor children from the otherwise certain path of vice, we are auxiliary to the encrease of national population. From industrious and useful servants, they will become exemplary wives and careful mothers. A blessed reflection, that instead of wandering about the streets, nuisances to society, and degrading to human nature, they become in the structure of national morality, like the polished corners of the temple, the source of domestic comforts, ornaments of honourable marriage, and rejoicing

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ing in a blooming offspring. Of such a woman Solomon saith, "the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her; she will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She will look well to the ways of her household; her children will rise up and call her blessed:" for "though favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; yet a woman that feareth the Lord she shall be praised *."

Hitherto I have addressed you in behalf of our charity as citizens of the state. And long as I have already detained you, here perhaps I ought to stop; but were my own child already deprived of its mother; and myself approaching to my last hour, my dying breath should be exhausted in pleading with those I most valued to protect its bereaved infancy.

Proverbs, xxxi. 11, 12, 27, 28, 30.

Putting

Putting myself then into the situation of a departing parent, I must conjure your bounty, for these orphans, by yet warmer motives than those of common good—the motives of humanity. Consider their infancy, how feeble and how helpless it is! Man, though in his adult state he is “made but a little lower than the angels*,” yet, in his infant years, he is not possessed of a single energy for his own relief: the lamb, dropped in the flock, is more capable of sustaining itself.

They are *orphans* too; an affecting name, even amidst the advantages of rank and affluence; but how much more so when deserted and penniless; tender plants, with no friendly cover to protect them from the hand of violence and the blasts of

* Psalm, viii. 5.

contagion;

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contagion; lambs, without a shepherd to feed them in green pastures, and lead them beside the waters of comfort! So forlorn a state is, I believe, unparalleled but in the single instance of the suffering Jesus; who said of himself, the "foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head*." Yet though they are thus aliens as it were in the creation, they are born with the same desires, the same capacities for happiness, with the children of a more favoured fortune: but deserted, unprotected, friendless, they must wither as abortive members of the human race, barren and leafless branches cut off from the tree of life. To them seasons return in vain; and while the earth spreads its lap of plenty before the sons of

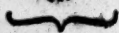
* Matt. viii. 20.

men,

men, to them it is alone denied: for them the sun emits no cheering ray; and night directs them to no hospitable roof. They hear of good, as one born blind listens to the account of light and colours; and having spent their day of cheerless vagrancy, they return to the womb of the earth, without having tasted one comfort of existence. But mark the difference in those whom these gates are thrown open to receive. It is but a few weeks since that, from this place, I addressed an orphan, at the expiration of her apprenticeship; whose mother perished in the street—literally bowed to the earth—by the inclemency of the weather, and the want of bread. A stranger took the infant from the side of its expiring mother; it was brought to this house so unconnected, as not even to have a name: and she is now a happy, a valuable servant,
with

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with every prospect of future respectability and comfort in her station.

Another case I cannot help drawing, which is not less affecting. A father dies, perhaps in the service of his country: it may be by a fever caught in excessive labour for his family. A mother is left with fatherless daughters; and she, worn out with labour, care, and grief, dies in penury. Picture to yourselves this poor woman languishing on her bed of sickness, with death in immediate expectation. When she looks upon her weeping little ones, and finds herself about to leave them totally defenceless; when she reflects that those, who are wrapt up in her very inmost soul, are going to be exposed to a wide world, full of snares, and violence, and cruelty, with all the horrors of famine and desertion; what a pang of insupportable agony must this
add

add to her dying moments ! but let some angel of comfort approach this dying bed, and tell the wretched mother that maintenance, protection, and every parental care, is prepared for her poor orphans, when she is no more ; what a gleam of joy would illumine her pallid countenance in her last moments, and with what heart-felt tranquillity would she say, “ Lord now lettest thou “ thy servant depart in peace* !” And if from heaven departed souls look down upon the children of the earth, when the beatified mother beholds, by your means, her orphan innocent and happy, she will each day represent your deeds of love at the throne of mercy ; and when, at the appointed hour, your spirits shall be set free from their mortal tabernacle, they shall wing their flight on the prayers of the orphan into the presence of their God, and

* Luke, ii. 29.



this mother shall plead "like angels trum-
" pet tongued" for the protectors of the
fatherless!

Do I then speak before parents, who
have themselves an infant offspring, perhaps
a race of blooming cherubs, in whom their
very souls are wrapt up; who think every
moment tedious while they are from them,
and return to them in heightened rapture?
Imagine these infants to become orphans,
your protection to be taken from them, and
your labours for their welfare and emolu-
ment to be at an end.

Or you who are affectionate wives, and
enraptured mothers; suppose that the fa-
ther is taken from them, that you are be-
come widows, and your little innocents
fatherless. In this heart-breaking thought,
look upon those fatherless and motherless;
and feel for those, who are yet crying with-
out for admission.

Are

Are you children; and is the mother, who nursed and watched your helpless infancy—the father, who cautioned, who instructed, who protected you, still spared to you? Have you still the blessing of that endearing relation, and the benefit of their experience? Have you felt in the hour of temptation the advantage of their parental caution, without which your steps had well nigh slipped? Then, in gratitude to God, compassionate those who have not been so highly favoured; and endeavour to extend those advantages to these little ones, not one of whom is it the will of your heavenly Father should perish.

Perhaps I speak to some whose hearts still bleed in the remembrance of that maternal love, which is now extinct: to some, who are ready to say, “Alas! I *had* “a father!” Sympathy is all-powerful: to such I need not appeal in behalf of those,
who

who, when they were deprived of their father and their mother, were deprived of their all!

I conclude as I begun: “Feed these “lambs;” and may your bounty return upon yourselves, laden with a blessing, and the dew of Heaven!

F I N I S.

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